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Title: Water and its Role in the Queensland Economy

Abstract

Water is Queensland's most valuable natural resource. Apart from the wet tropics, Queensland is a dry landmass where water must be carefully managed if future generations are to benefit from its use. Total Queensland water use of 4 592 (GL) in 1996-1997 was 19 per cent of the total Australian water use of 24 082 GL including urban and rural use for both production and consumption (Australian Natural Resources Atlas, 2001).

In Queensland, the 1996-1997 water use data is 97 per cent higher than the 1983-1984 water use of 2 330 GL/yr. The dominant driver of increased water demand is the irrigated agriculture sector, which contributes significantly to the Queensland economy. In response to market opportunities, many irrigation industries have undergone fundamental reforms and are now emerging as income generators. Irrigated agriculture not only provides a high proportion of Australia's domestic consumption of fruit, vegetables, wine, rice, sugar and dairy products but is also an important component of Australia's export trade, accounting for about a third of the rural sector exports.