

Drillers Qualification Advisory Committee (DQAC)

Time: 2.00pm – 4.00pm

Date: 10 May 2021

Location: Goyder Building, Level 4 Large Conference Room, 25 Chung Wah Tce, Palmerston and Microsoft Teams (video conferencing)

Members: See Table 1

Attendees: Ian Lancaster, David George, Rebecca Mohr-Bell, Natasha Rammers, Trevor Edwards, Lance Martin, Martina Matzner, Tim Westcott

Apologies: Nil

1. Minutes

Time	Item	Who	Resolution
2.00 pm	1) Meeting opening	Chair	Nil
	2) Attendance and Apologies	Chair	Noted
2.05 pm	3) Licensing and Regulation Activities	Abbe Damrow	Noted
<p>The Director Water Licensing and Regulation provided an update on recent regulatory investigations with licenced drillers that resulted in the issuing of official warnings and a review of the exemptions. Discussion was held about determining the triggers and levels of disciplinary actions, which are guided by the Department's Compliance and Enforcement Policy. Several issues were raised in regard to the current exemptions applicable to water bore drilling, in particular the need for a licence to drill water bores within a road reserve. The Director Water Licensing and Regulation will follow-up and clarify.</p>			
2.20 pm	4) Drilling Licence Statistics	Abbe Damrow	Noted
<p>The Director Water Licensing and Regulation provided a report on drilling licence statistics. Across the Northern Territory there is 158 drilling licences, 35 are active drillers and routinely providing statements of bores, of these 22 are NT residents and 13 are interstate residents. In 2020-2021 financial year, 508 statement of bores have been submitted. The committee would like to see drilling licence statistics report based over a 5 year comparison period, the number of statements of bores returned based on districts, and how many new drilling licences, renewals, transfers and additional endorsements have been issued. This will be a standing agenda item for future meetings.</p>			
3.00 pm	5) Driller Licence Application Form	Abbe Damrow	Advised
<p>The Director Water Licensing and Regulation provided a draft copy of the updated Drillers Licence Application form for a new drilling licence, upgrade of licence or additional endorsement. The form has been updated to make it clearer in terms of the information required and includes a section for detailing</p>			

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<p>prior drilling experience and evidence of drilling qualifications. The Department sought advice from the Committee on the number of bore statements required for each drilling endorsement for a Class 1 licence. The Committee agreed that 6 statement of bores are required for each endorsement the applicant is applying for. The Committee also agreed that the licence application should be amended to have the applicant declare that they would follow the Minimum Construction Requirements and any other requirements, for Water Bores in Australia.</p>			
3.15 pm	6) Driller Licensing Regulation – Achieving regulatory objectives with a lighter regulatory touch.	Abbe Damrow	Advised
<p>A briefing paper was provided to the committee regarding Driller Licensing Regulation to discuss opportunities for the Department to target its regulatory activity by leveraging the existing (and improved) regulatory framework to achieve results with less effort. With respect to driller licensing and bore work the Department has identified a pathway to achieving results with less effort that begins by considering the relationship between bore work permits, driller licence documents, the national standards and NT specific construction requirements.</p> <p>The Department sought advice from the Committee on the type of evidence a licensed driller could provide to demonstrate that a bore has been constructed in accordance with the minimum requirements and methods, if any, that could be used for determining if a completed bore meets the minimum requirements, after works have been completed.</p> <p>The Committee suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide photographic evidence by taking a photo before and after the collar is put in so it can be proven that it was put into the ground • Provide mud particulars (how much was used) • Provide sample of grout for Landholder to maintain • Chemical/ biological monitoring <p>The Committee also recommended the Department should ensure information is available to the permit holder to ensure the permit holder understands the risks of having a bore drilled.</p>			
3.30 pm	7) Class 3 driller qualifications		Advised
<p>In accordance with the National Uniform Drillers Licence System Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) an application for a Class 3 drillers licence restricted to operations outside the Great Artesian Basin was recently declined by the Department because the driller had not demonstrated experience using weighted mud to control pressurised flowing water during construction of a Class 3 bore in the field.</p> <p>The driller is an experienced Class 2 driller and provided 8 statements of bore for Class 3 bores, rotary air under supervision. The driller passed the required exam and interview. However, the driller was unable to demonstrate practical experience in rotary mud drilling. The driller approached the Department regarding the feasibility of restricting Class 3 licences to rotary air.</p> <p>The Department sought DQACs advice on the merit of Class 3 restrictions that could limit endorsements to rotary air.</p> <p>The Committee discussed:</p>			

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distinguishing factor between a Class 3 licence and any other licence is the capacity to control the uplifting of water from a flowing aquifer when undertaking drilling activities. Control is managed by the use of drilling mud correctly weighted to the pressure of the flowing aquifer. Air is lighter than groundwater and cannot control a flowing aquifer. Although there may be occasion when drilling a Class 3 bore that high pressure flow is not encountered; it is critical that if high pressure flows developed the driller can respond immediately. Demonstrating that experience in using drilling mud in a Class 3 bore is key to obtaining a Class 3 licence. <p>The Committee unanimously agreed that an applicant must be able to demonstrate the use of drilling mud on a free flowing bore under pressure and that it would be inappropriate to grant a Class 3 licence with restricted endorsements to rotary air.</p>		
3.45 pm	Next meeting scheduled September/October 2021		Agreed
4.00 pm	Meeting Close		

2. Action items

Action	When	Who
Provide the Committee with a final copy of Licensed Water Bore Drillers 2020 Communications and Engagement Plan	June 2021	Department
Provide the Committee with a final copy of the application form Apply for a drilling licence	June 2021	Department
Provide the Committee with an updated template for drilling industry statistics	June 2021	Department
Address expiring committee membership	July 2021	Department
Provide update on drilling licence exemptions	Sept 2021	Department
Provide copy of ADIA guide for landowners	Sept 2021	Tim Westcott

Table 1 Members and expiry date

Member	Expiry
Ian Lancaster (Chair)	31/7/21
David George (Alternative Chair)	31/7/22
Rebecca Mohr-Bell (Alternative Chair)	31/7/21
Natasha (Tash) Rammers	31/7/21
Trevor Edwards	31/7/22
Lance Martin	31/7/22
Martina Matzner	31/7/22
Tim Westcott	31/7/21

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