



# Water Extraction Licences

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a water licence?

A water licence is an entitlement to take and use groundwater from a bore or surface water from a waterway including rivers and creeks. A water licence provides you with a water entitlement, a volume of water that you can use. A water licence is typically granted for a 10 year period but longer term licences may be approved in special circumstances.

### Do I need to apply for a water licence?

You need a water licence if you are using water for a commercial activity including agriculture, aquaculture, industry or irrigating a garden larger than 0.5 hectares. You do not require a water licence if you are using water (groundwater or surface water) for the purposes of:

- stock and domestic, or
- road construction and/or maintenance.

In the Alice Springs and Daly/Roper Water/Beetaloo Control Districts you do not require a groundwater extraction licence if you are using less than 5ML/year on your property.

Apart from the above listed exemptions a water licence is required:

- for all bores pumping over 15 litres per second,
- if you do not have direct access to the source of water,
- if you are located within a Water Control District.
- If you are unsure it's important to check with your regional office.

### What happens if I take water without a licence?

Apart from the uses not requiring a licence, it is prohibited to take and use water unless authorised or licensed under the *Water Act*. If you take and use water without a licence when it is required you will be liable for prosecution.

### How long does it take to process my application?

Approximately 3-6 months; The assessment processes associated with a water licence application and its determination can be extensive.

### Why do you advertise my licence application?

The purpose of this notice is to seek public input to the assessment of licence applications. Public submissions are accepted within a 30 day period after the notice has been advertised. A public notice's advertised or all new and increased water licence applications. The notice is advertised by the department with the cost of the advertisement paid by the applicant.

The Water Act also requires another public notice to be published when a decision has been made for a water licence application. The notice will include the reasons for the decision and opportunity to appeal. The cost of this advertisement is paid by the department.



## What criteria are used to assess my application?

The controller of water resources must consider a number of factors when considering a water licence application.

- availability of water in the area,
- existing water licence entitlements,
- water allocation plan rules,
- potential effects of water extraction and the integrity of the water resource,
- Planning Act provisions related to development and land use in the area.

## Do I have an opportunity to appeal if my licence is refused?

Yes, an applicant may apply to have a decision reviewed by the Minister.



## What are my responsibilities as a licence holder?

Comply with all licence conditions:

- install and maintain a water meter,
- report monthly extraction (pumpage/meter readings) to us,
- use no more than your maximum water entitlement.

If there is a reason you cannot comply with the licence conditions it is important you make contact with the department as soon as practicable. Keeping the department informed and working with the department to achieve compliance will benefit you should there be any reason to take future compliance action.

## Why do I have to install a water meter?

Knowing how much water is being used at an individual property level helps the department manage the resource at a regional level and ultimately protects users from water shortages. A well maintained water meter provides accurate water use data on the volume of water being pumped from the resource.

## What does the department do with meter readings?

Water use data is used along with rainfall, river/spring flow and groundwater level data to monitor the impact of human activity. There should be a balance between the volume entering the system via recharge (rainfall) and the volume leaving it via pumping and natural discharge (springs). This information informs and supports water management decisions for sustainable use of the resource.



## Can I trade my water?

Yes, if there is a declared water allocation plan area and it's in accordance with the rules set out in the plan. Generally trading is restricted within a water management zone.

For further information refer to the relevant water trading factsheet for your area on our website [www.denr.nt.gov.au/water](http://www.denr.nt.gov.au/water)

## If I sell my property does the water licence stay with the property and how is it transferred?

If you sell your property the licence remains with the property. You should notify the department as soon as practicable such that the public licence register can be updated. The department will also seek to update the licence to reflect the new owner details.

## What is a licence security category?

Licence security categories apply to Top End water extraction licences only.

Licence security categories prioritise how water is allocated between all licences every year based on recharge from rainfall. As water availability varies from year to year depending on the wet season, so does the volume of water available under a licence.

Four types of security categories might apply:

- Total (public water supply)
- High/Priority
- Medium/General
- Low

Security categories determine the order in which licences will be reduced in drier years when there is not enough water in the resource to provide environmental flows as well as full demand from users.

When this happens, licences will be reduced progressively until environmental flows are protected starting with low security then if necessary medium security followed, if necessary, by high security and lastly if necessary by total security.

## What is the water licence public register?

The NT *Water Act* requires a public register for all water extraction licenses. The register provides information about the resource, licensee's and their water entitlements. It is a useful resource if you are considering water trading and can be accessed from our website: [www.nt.gov.au/environment/water/approved-water-extraction-licences](http://www.nt.gov.au/environment/water/approved-water-extraction-licences)