

Do I need a water licence to take water from my bore, dam or watercourse?



This fact sheet contains information about the requirements for taking water from bores, dams and watercourses. In South Australia, all take from surface water (including dams and watercourses) and ground water (including bores/wells) sources is regulated under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* (the Act).

1. Do I need a water licence?

Whether or not you need a licence depends on where you are located and what you are using the water for. Frequently asked questions are provided below and a summary table and map on page 3 & 4.

a. I need to use water for personal household use and to water my garden – do I need a licence?

In all areas of the state, water can be taken from your bore, dam or watercourse without a water licence for drinking or cooking (at a rate that does not exceed 100 litres per person per day).

b. What if I need to use more than 100 litres per day for personal household use and to water my garden?

Whether or not you need a licence depends on where you are taking water from.

If you are taking water from the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse, the Far North Prescribed Wells Area, the Northern Adelaide Plains Prescribed Wells Area, or a dam that is 5 megalitres (5,000 kilolitres) or greater in the Western Mount Lofty Ranges, or using water to carry on a business, yes, you need a licence.

However, in all other areas/situations across the state, water can be taken to:

- water a domestic garden that is 0.4 hectares (one acre) or less

- for personal household use without a licence.

If your garden is bigger than 0.4 hectares you need a licence.

c. I need water for stock, do I need a licence?

If you are taking water from the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse, the Far North Prescribed Wells Area, the Northern Adelaide Plains Prescribed Wells Area, or a dam that is 5 megalitres (5,000 kilolitres) or greater in the Western Mount Lofty Ranges, or using water for intensive farming such as feedlots, piggeries, poultry sheds, yes, you need a licence. In all other instances, you do not need a licence for stock drinking purposes.

d. I need to use water for something else (e.g. irrigation or commercial use), do I need a licence?

If you are in a prescribed water resource area, you need a licence to take and use water where you are carrying on a business or irrigating greater than 0.4 hectares of land. In certain circumstances (see above), a licence is required to use water for stock and domestic purposes.

e. How do I know if the water I want to use comes from a prescribed water resource?

Most of the significant water resources in South Australia are prescribed, including the greater metropolitan area, northern Adelaide plains, the Mount Lofty Ranges, River Murray and most of the south-east of the state.

To find out whether the water you want to use comes from a prescribed water resource, refer to [NatureMaps Home](#). Select the following layers by expanding 'Water' then selecting:

- + Groundwater: 'Prescribed Water Resources Areas' and 'Prescribed Wells Areas', and
- + Surface Water: 'Prescribed Surface Water Areas' and 'Prescribed Water Courses'.

Alternatively, please contact the Department for Environment and Water. An overview map is provided on page 4 of this fact sheet.

6. Do I need a water licence if I obtain water from SA Water or another commercial water provider (e.g. carter)?

If you are taking SA Water reticulated mains or accessing water via a third-party water carter, you do not need a licence. There may be exceptions for the use of imported water (whereby an agreement is in place between the user and provider). For other arrangements, please contact the Department for Environment and Water to discuss your circumstances.

7. Do I need a licence to provide water to a neighbour for domestic or stock purposes?

You can provide water to your neighbour for their own personal drinking and cooking purposes without a water licence. For enquiries regarding supplying water for all other purposes, you can contact your local Water Licensing office to discuss your circumstances.

8. Can I use water collected from my roofs in a tank without a licence?

In all areas, rainwater collected from a roof may be used for your own stock and/or domestic purposes, without a licence. Within certain areas (Baroota, Barossa, Clare, Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges, Marne Saunders, Morambo Creek), up to 1500 kilolitres of water can be collected (based on roof area and rainfall) from roofs for other purposes without a licence. In all other areas of the state, surface water collected from a roof may be taken without a licence for all purposes.

9. How do I apply for a water licence?

If you would like further information on your licensing requirements or would like to apply for a water licence, you can contact your local Water Licensing office. Application forms are also available at: www.environment.sa.gov.au/licences-and-permits/water-licence-and-permit-forms.

10. I have a water licence, but may exceed my available allocation – what can I do?

You are encouraged to actively monitor your water usage to determine if you are likely to use more than your available allocation. It is important to be aware that if you use more than your allocation, you are in breach of your licence and the Act. A mandatory penalty applies for unlawful and unauthorised take (this includes taking more than your available allocation). To view the current penalty rates visit: www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water-and-river-murray/water-licences-allocations-and-markets/water-licences-accounts-and-metering/water-fees-penalties-and-compliance.

If you anticipate exceeding your available allocation, you should consider minimising use, using mains water from SA Water (where available), or trading water, to remain

compliant and avoid a penalty. If you are unsure of the volume of water you have available for use, please contact your local Water Licensing office.

11. How do I trade water?

Each prescribed water resources area within South Australia has its own set of rules in relation to water trade. These are set out in the relevant water allocation plan (WAP).

In addition to sourcing a water trade on the water market, an application to transfer water must also be lodged with the Department for Environment and Water. Application forms are located here:

www.environment.sa.gov.au/licences-and-permits/water-licence-and-permit-forms. Further information is available here: www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water-and-river-murray/water-licences-allocations-and-markets/water-markets-and-trade/buying-and-selling-water.

There are a number of water brokers that service South Australia. A water broker can help you to buy or sell water rights through their website and client databases. The Department for Environment and Water is not involved with setting prices for water trade – the purchase price for the transaction is a private arrangement.

12. How can I source water if my well or dam is not meeting my needs?

If you do not have access to mains water and your tanks, well or dam are not meeting your needs, you may source water from a [registered drinking water provider](#).

Relevant Links

[SA Health – Registered drinking water providers](#)

[PIRSA Recovery Hotline – 1800 931 314](#)

[Landscape South Australia](#)

Contact details

Water Licensing – Berri

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Water Licensing – Adelaide

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81-95 Waymouth Street, Adelaide SA 5000

DEWwaterlicensing@sa.gov.au

Water Licensing – Mount Gambier

Ph. 8735 1134

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www.environment.sa.gov.au

SUMMARY TABLE – LICENSING REQUIREMENTS PER PRESCRIBED AREA

Purpose	prescribed water resource					
	River Murray	Far North	Northern Adelaide Plains	Western Mount Lofty Ranges	All other prescribed	Non prescribed
☒ Water can be taken <u>without</u> a water licence						
☐ A water licence is required						
Drinking or cooking (personal use up to 100 litres per person per day)	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
Other household (domestic) purposes	See note 1	☐	☐	See note 2	☒	☒
Irrigation of a domestic garden (0.4 hectare/1 acre or less)	☐	☐	☐	See note 2	☒	☒
Irrigation of a domestic garden (<u>larger than</u> 0.4 hectare/1 acre)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
For stock that is <u>not</u> intensively farmed	☐	☐	☐	See note 2	☒	☒
To carry on a business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
Water for intensively farmed stock (feedlots, piggeries etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
Firefighting (and other activities authorised under section 105 of the Act - see note 3)	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
Water from SA Water or a commercial provider (see note 4)	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒

Note 1. A licence is required unless taken from a watercourse that adjoins or runs through the occupiers land and the water is used by the occupier for domestic purposes.

Note 2. A licence is required to take water (including for stock and domestic purposes) from a dam with a capacity of 5,000 kilolitres or greater; or from the Fleurieu Swamps (listed as a critically endangered ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth), unless the taking of water commenced prior to 20 October 2005.

Note 3. This includes (but is not limited to) water taken for:

- fire fighting,
- road making,
- applying chemicals for non-irrigated crops
- control of pest plants and animals,
- native title purposes.

For the full list of activities authorised under section 105 of the Act see this link: [Department for Environment and Water - Notices to restrict or...](#)

Note 4. Water providers are required to have their own licence to take water from prescribed water resources for their business. However, a licence may be required if imported water is taken.

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MAP OF PRESCRIBED WATER RESOURCE AREAS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

