

Water Allocation Plan

For the Far North Prescribed Wells Area

South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board

THE GUIDE

FEBRUARY 2021

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND 3

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS 5

Why do we need a Water Allocation Plan?	5
What is a prescribed wells area and how is the boundary defined?	5
Why was the Plan reviewed and updated?	6
Which water resources in the FNPWA are included in this Plan?	6
What about groundwater that doesn't come from the Great Artesian Basin?	6
What about water from creeks, rivers or lakes?	7
What is not changing in the Plan?	7
What is new or different in the Plan?	7
Has the impact of climate change been considered?	7
How are First Nations water interests acknowledged in the Plan?	8
What is a consumptive pool?	8
Is there a limit to the amount of water I can take?	8
Why have the purpose based allocation rules been removed?	9
Are domestic allocations changing?	9
Is water use efficiency encouraged by the policies in the Plan?	9
How are key water dependent ecosystems being protected?	10
Can I take water from a spring? Or can I allow my stock to drink from a spring?	10
Can I locate a well in the vicinity of a GAB Spring?	10
How are significant groundwater dependent ecosystems (other than the GAB springs) protected?	11
Will removing the cap on the amount of water allocated to the production of hydrocarbons be a risk to the environment?	11
How is water use efficiency through reuse or re-injection of co-produced water going to be managed?	12
Are there contamination issues/concerns with the reinjection of co-produced water?	12
Will existing bore fed wetland licences be affected?	12
Can I have a bore fed wetland?	12

WATER LICENCES 14

What is the separation of water rights, or the ‘new water licensing system’?	14
Water licence example	15
What is a Water Access Entitlement and how does it relate to an allocation?	15
Does a licensee need a ‘water resource works approval’?	16
What is the difference between a ‘Source’ and a ‘Resource’?	16
Do I need a water licence?	16
Will licenses be allocated to new users?	16
Are people with existing licences protected from impact by new users?	16
I would like to irrigate a crop or pasture. Can I do this?	16
Will the trading of water be allowed?	17
Will licensees be required to report on their water use?	17
What monitoring will be undertaken to demonstrate that the Plan is working effectively?	17
Can I drill a well if I have an allocation?	17
What are the responsibilities as a water management authorisation holder in the Far North Prescribed Wells Area?	17
Are there any other requirements that apply in the Far North Prescribed Wells Area?	17

WHAT IS NOT PART OF THE PLAN? 18

Does the new Plan introduce the metering of water use?	18
How are water levies determined and will they change?	18
Does BHP require a water licence for its activities at Olympic Dam and Roxby Downs?	19
What are Water Affecting Activities?	19

SHORTENED FORMS

Board – South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board

DEW – Department for Environment and Water

FNPWA – Far North Prescribed Wells Area

GDE – Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem

Plan – Water Allocation Plan

PWA – Prescribed Wells Area



A GUIDE TO THE WATER ALLOCATION PLAN FOR THE FAR NORTH PRESCRIBED WELLS AREA

This document has been prepared by the South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board to provide the community of water users in the Far North of the SA Arid Lands region with a guide to the statutory document that is the *Water Allocation Plan for the Far North Prescribed Wells Area* (the Plan).

This guide does not replace or supplement the Plan. Rather, it provides the reader with additional information and context to assist with understanding the Plan. If, after reading the Plan and this guide, you are not clear on your rights and responsibilities under the Water Allocation Plan (WAP) you may need to seek expert advice to interpret the Plan.

References to ‘the board’ through this document are referring to the South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board (the Board) and its predecessor, the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board (SAAL NRM Board). Whilst these entities are unique in their own right, the SAAL NRM Board initiated the process of review and amendment of the *Water Allocation Plan for the Far North Prescribed Wells Area* and upon the dissolution of that board and the formation of the South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board, the task of completing the amended Plan was assumed by the latter board. This has been a seamless process and the Minister for Environment and Water, The Hon David Spiers MP, adopted the Plan on 28 February 2021.

This guide is a non-legal document designed to accompany the Plan and provides background on the development of Plan. It also includes frequently asked questions that explain more simply some of the policies within the Plan and links to the relevant section relating to the topic of the question.

Please note:

The Plan is a statutory document and this guide has been designed to read alongside the Plan.

This guide is not a replacement to the Plan and does not offer a complete explanation of the Plan.

You may need to seek expert advice in interpreting sections of the Plan.



BACKGROUND

The Far North Prescribed Wells Area (FNPWA) was prescribed on 27 March 2003 under the *Water Resources Act 1997* and the first Water Allocation Plan for the FNPWA was adopted on 16th February 2009 (2009 Plan) under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act). The prescription covers all wells drilled in the aquifers of the FNPWA, including the South Australian portion of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB).

- The FNPWA covers an area of 315,000 km² (32% of South Australia), and includes the towns of Coober Pedy, Oodnadatta, William Creek, Marla and Innamincka with an approximate population of 4,000. The area's industries and annual economic value include:
 - Pastoral – \$84 million
 - Mining – \$2.8 billion
 - Oil and gas - \$4.5 billion
 - Tourism and cultural enterprises – \$150 million.

Groundwater from the GAB and the other aquifers provide a reliable water source for these industries. The GAB also supports endemic spring complexes that have species listed as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Water Allocation Plans are a framework, setting out how water is shared between users including the environment. The 2009 Plan was developed in response to increasing concerns about wasteful practices and decreasing water pressure in the GAB.

Following a review of the 2009 Plan, the SAAL NRM Board committed to amend the inaugural 2009 Plan and commenced this process in 2017.

Refer to pages 1 to 6 of the Plan for further detailed background information

For information on the current demands on the groundwater resources of the Far North Prescribed Wells Area refer Chapter 5, pages 39-47 of the Plan.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The section below gives further explanation of what is in the Plan together with some of the rationale for the changes that have been made. If you are a water licence holder your rights and obligations are established by the Plan, please remember the Plan is the ultimate reference point.

Why do we need a Water Allocation Plan?

Important water resources in South Australia are protected and managed by being prescribed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* (the Act).

Prescription means the water resources must be sustainably managed to provide security for all water users now and into the future. This is done through a Water Allocation Plan (WAP) which sets the rules by which the available water in a resource is shared between environmental requirements and human uses.

For the purposes of human use, a water allocation plan sets up a licensing arrangement that regulates the amount of water available for this use. This licensing arrangement provides an entitlement to water for licence holders.

What is a prescribed wells area and how is the boundary defined?

A Prescribed Wells Area (PWA) is an area within which the wells are prescribed. The prescription of the area includes a description of the boundary or includes a map of the boundary of the PWA. The boundary of the Far North PWA (FNPWA) is shown in figure 1.1. on page 8 of the Plan.

Why was the Plan reviewed and updated?

As required by the Act the board undertook a review of the 2009 Plan and resolved to develop a new plan. The main reasons for this decision were:

- To reflect changes to legislation which ‘unbundled’ water rights, to provide more security around water rights and enable easier transfer of water rights.
- Whilst the 2009 Plan acknowledged that Aboriginal culture is connected to the water resources of FNPWA, the cultural relationship to water was not well understood or well documented in the 2009 Plan.
- Due to emerging water demands, a more flexible approach to the management of the resource was required to enable opportunities for sustainable economic development.
- A raft of scientific work has been undertaken since the 2009 Plan was drafted which has significantly changed our understanding of how the SA portion of the Great Artesian Basin functions. In particular that groundwater pressures are in a state of natural decline, albeit over very long timescales, due to discharges from the resources exceeding the recharge to the system. This improved understanding informs the management of the resource and the Plan.
- Whilst the principles in the 2009 Plan have provided a robust management framework for the GAB water resources, all of the ground water resources in the Far North are prescribed and the 2009 Plan was largely silent on the management of non-GAB groundwater.

Which water resources in the FNPWA are included in this Plan?

The notice of prescription applies to all wells that take groundwater within the PWA boundary described above. The taking of surface water (rivers, creeks, lakes, floodplains etc.) and collection of rainwater is not affected by the rules established by the Plan.

The South Australian Arid Lands Water Affecting Activity (WAA) Control Policy requires permits or approvals for some activities that impact surface water systems including watercourses, floodplains and lakes.

Visit the board’s website for further details
www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/water/water-affecting-activities

What about groundwater that doesn’t come from the Great Artesian Basin?

The prescription of the wells in the Far North Prescribed Wells Area applies to all wells that access aquifers/ groundwater supplies in the region. This means that the rules that apply to the taking of water in the region apply to all groundwater users.

What about water from creeks, rivers or lakes?

Water from watercourses, creeks, lakes, dams, waterholes and other surface water is not prescribed in the Far North, however there are rules that may apply to activities that have the potential to impact or affect the condition, persistence and connectivity of water resources. The Act provides for landscape boards to develop Water Affecting Activity (WAA) Control Policies. The WAA Control policies regulate these activities through a permitting system with the aim to protect water resources, water users and water dependent ecosystems.

For more information on Water Affecting Activities visit the boards website
www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/water/water-affecting-activities

What is not changing in the Plan?

- The objectives for the Plan are largely unchanged from those in the 2009 Plan.
- GAB springs are still robustly protected.
- Rights of existing licences are maintained.

What is new or different in the Plan?

The main modifications in the Plan include:

- further acknowledgement of Aboriginal water interests;
- protection of significant groundwater dependent ecosystems beyond the GAB springs;
- the removal of a volumetric cap on the water which can be used for any purpose within the FNPWA;
- the removal of purpose based allocation rules; and
- principles aimed at improving water use efficiency through reuse or re-injection of co-produced water unless it is deemed not reasonably practical.

Further, the principles in the Plan enable the separation of water rights or 'unbundling' of water licences.

While the principles in the Plan may look different to the 2009 Plan principles, they largely reflect the objectives of the 2009 Plan.

For more information on water licensing visit
www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water/water-licences-and-permits

Has the impact of climate change been considered?

The impact of climate change on groundwater systems, particularly systems as large and complex as the GAB, is very difficult to model and even more difficult to quantify. Recent research has demonstrated that the majority of recharge in the western margin of the GAB occurred over 10,000 years ago with virtually no recharge occurring since. In essence the Basin is in a state of natural decline and has been responding to long term climate variations for millennia.

By default this accounts for climate change, as the pressure in the basin is a reflection of the climate, albeit over a long timescale.

The Plan includes information around possible diversification of industry in response to climate change. Specifically, the introductory chapter of the Plan includes a subsection (Section 1.6, page 9) on the Impacts of Climate Change.

How are First Nations water interests acknowledged in the Plan?

Given the importance of access to water for cultural purposes, including the use of water for this purpose by First Nations people who are not native title holders, the Plan authorises the use of groundwater by First Nations people through the creation of a Cultural Water Consumptive Pool. Water from this pool is authorised to be used for the purpose of satisfying a First Nations person's personal, domestic, cultural, spiritual or non-commercial communal needs where they are doing so in the exercise or enjoyment of their cultural interests.

Water licenses are not required to be issued in relation to this consumptive pool, rather the Cultural Water Consumptive Pool acknowledges the inherent right of First Nations people to have access to water to continue to practice culture upon country.

Incorporating the traditional knowledge of First Nations people in the management of the take and use of water from the groundwater resource is integral in achieving successful water planning outcomes. Collaboration with First Nations people in the FNPWA in relation to water management will take time and is considered fundamental in the implementation of this Plan.

During the development of the Plan conversations commenced with First Nations, however there is still significant work to be undertaken to better incorporate the traditional knowledge of First Nations people in the water planning framework.

While these conversations continue, it is important that First Nation voices are heard in the decision making process for the placement of new wells and for the taking of water from wells which may compromise the cultural significance of particular sites.

The Plan outlines existing practices of referral for native title holders and clarified the role of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) in permit approval processes, as well as providing for further input from First Nations peoples and communities in addition to existing requirements under the Native Title.

The principles that are salient to the role of First Nations people in the management of the resource are principles 32, 45 and 50 of the Plan on pages 59, 64 and 66 respectively.

What is a consumptive pool?

The consumptive pool is the water available for consumptive purposes. The water requirements for springs and water dependent ecosystems is already taken into account and is not part of a consumptive pool. In the Plan three consumptive pools are based on purpose of use. These are:

- Cultural Water Consumptive Pool
- Stock and Domestic Consumptive Pool
- All Purpose Consumptive Pool

More information on Consumptive Pools can be found in Chapter 6, page 52 of the Plan.

Is there a limit to the amount of water I can take?

The 2009 Plan had a volumetric cap of the water which could be used for specific purposes or from within specific zones. The Plan does not have a limit for the volume of water which can be licenced. Rather, water can be issued as long as the applicant can demonstrate the taking of water will not result in any undesired impacts to the groundwater resource, springs, non-spring groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs), existing users of the resource, and will not damage, disturb or interfere with any site of cultural significance.

Why have the purpose based allocation rules been removed?

The 2009 Plan had many rules around how water can be taken for differing purposes and how water would be allocated for different purposes. The Plan removes the link to purpose in terms of allocating water and focusses on what the impact of taking that water would be on the resource. If the impact is deemed to be acceptable then the allocation will be authorised regardless of its purpose.

Some conditions on licences may be required for different purposes for example, requiring reporting or monitoring etc. The allocation of water will not be dependent on the use of the water with the exception of water for Stock and Domestic purposes which have specified volumes which can be allocated.

Is water use efficiency encouraged by the policies in the Plan?

Good management of the groundwater in the PWA relies on using the allocated water efficiently. This is achieved through the requirements of the Terms and Conditions for consideration on a water licence or water allocation (s6.7 principle 28 page 57), Water Resource Works Approvals (s7.6 principle 55 page 69) and Site Use Approvals (s7.8 principles 60 & 61 page 71). In short, these provisions require water to be used efficiently and in such a manner that water is not wasted. The requirement for pastoral water to be delivered through closed delivery systems is an example of one of the provisions of the Plan that achieves this aim.

Are domestic allocations changing?

Existing allocations for domestic purposes will remain unchanged, however for consistency with existing allocations, water allocations for new or future domestic purposes will use the rate of 3.65ML per dwelling per year. Domestic allocation includes water to be used in the running of a dwelling including cooking, cleaning and bathing. This is in addition to water required to maintain gardens, swimming pools, washing of trucks and other vehicles as required or any other domestic purpose by the owner or lessee.

A dwelling means a structure on the property which is able to house people for all or part of the year and water would be required to enable usage of the dwelling.

How are key water dependent ecosystems being protected?

The Act requires that the needs of water dependent ecosystems are assessed and that a WAP must ensure there is sufficient water provided to these ecosystems. In the FNPWA only the groundwater is prescribed, therefore the measures in the Plan apply to those ecosystems that depend on groundwater in part or in full, and not surface water systems (for example rivers and creeks).

In the case of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) springs the primary focus is on maintaining pressure in the aquifer so the springs and soaks continue to have water flowing to them.

There are other groundwater dependent ecosystems in the region which are deemed likely to be refuge sites within the landscape that have also been afforded extra protection.

Section 2.1.3 page 19 of the Plan clarifies how buffer zones around springs were determined. Further clarity has also been provided around the approvals required for the taking of water from priority springs.

Section 2.1.3 page 19 also provides clarity on how existing users' licences will be issued and stipulates that site use approvals are required to enable the taking of water from priority springs.

Section 2.2.3 page 25 of the Plan clarifies how buffers for groundwater dependent ecosystems which are not springs were determined, and provides direction to users on how to apply for well construction permits in close proximity to these sites.

Can I take water from a spring? Or can I allow my stock to drink from a spring?

Under the definition of a 'well' in the Landscape Act (and reiterated in the Plan) for the purposes of the Act, a 'spring' falls under the definition of a 'well' and is therefore subject to the rules and conditions that apply to wells for the take and use of water. Therefore the owner of the land on which the spring exists requires a water access entitlement to enable the take of water for a purpose which requires a licence.

Watering stock is a purpose that requires a licence. Dependent on if the spring is identified as a priority spring (see section 2.1.3 page 19 of the Plan), a site use approval may be required (principle 61 page 71) to ensure that the taking of water from the spring does not disturb the ecological functionality of the spring.

Can I locate a well in the vicinity of a GAB Spring?

The taking of water from a new well located within 5km of a spring (Zone A) will only be approved if it can be demonstrated the water taken will not detrimentally impact upon the groundwater pressure levels and gradients required to maintain the ecology of the spring.

How are significant groundwater dependent ecosystems (other than the GAB springs) protected?

There are many groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs) within the FNPWA which are not springs, including:

- 1) Channel floodplain – e.g. Kallakoopah Creek
- 2) Permanent waterhole – e.g. Algebuckina waterhole
- 3) Semi-permanent waterhole – e.g. Hookies Waterhole
- 4) Ramsar – e.g. Coongie lakes.
- 5) Isolated local aquifers – e.g. Small valleys identified in vicinity of Hookies Waterhole
- 6) Terminal lakes – e.g. Lake Hope

A risk assessment of these non-spring GDEs was undertaken to determine which were at the highest risk of being impacted by the taking of shallow groundwater. Only the isolated local aquifers GDE type was identified as being at a moderate risk due to the taking of shallow groundwater because this type of GDE acts as a refuge in the landscape for fauna. As such there are provisions in the Plan in order to protect these locations.

Where a proposed site of water take is within a 100m buffer around sites identified as being at moderate risk, an applicant is required to demonstrate that the taking of water is unlikely to impact upon the GDE and thereby enable it to be maintained as a refuge in the landscape.

A flow chart showing the permit application process related to non-spring GDEs has been included section 2.2.3 page 25 of the Plan. To provide access to data around non-spring GDEs, a subsection has been included in the Plan that provides links to data available on NatureMaps. Due to the scale of GDE locations, it is difficult to provide this information on a static map in the Plan.

Will removing the cap on the amount of water allocated to the production of hydrocarbons be a risk to the environment?

The rules in the Plan protect the environment, existing users and sites of cultural significance and apply to all new applications to take water. New users, or those seeking an increased water access entitlement, will have to provide evidence to the satisfaction of the Minister that their proposed water take will not have a detrimental impact before an application for a new or increased allocation is approved.

How is water use efficiency through reuse or re-injection of co-produced water going to be managed?

The Plan has principles which require that any water above that which is currently allocated for the purposes of petroleum production not be disposed of by means of evaporation on the lands surface, unless the Minister deems it not reasonably practicable. This means that prior to an entitlement being increased for petroleum production, a feasibility study will need to be undertaken in relation to reinjection or reuse of the water. If it is deemed feasible then a condition on the licence will specify that the water cannot be disposed of on the land. If not feasible the Minister will work with petroleum producers to determine the best way forward for the resource and the industry.

Further, for the water which is currently allocated for this purpose (60ML/day), the Plan states that unless the Minister deems it not reasonably practicable, the volume water which is currently disposed to the lands surface shall be minimised within 10 years of the adoption of the Plan.

Principles in the Plan provide flexibility to licensees around how they minimise the water that is that is disposed of to the lands surface for evaporation.

If the water is injected, the petroleum companies will be issued with recharge credits which they can use as a further allocation. The recharge credits are exempt from a levy fee.

The Plan has requirements regarding the location of recharge and extraction points.

It is important to note that reinjection requirements do not apply to contaminated water (for example in tailings facilities).

Are there contamination issues/ concerns with the reinjection of co-produced water?

The Plan has a number of measures to protect other users and the environment. A permit is required for draining or discharging of water into a well under section 104(3) (c) of the Act.

Water that is drained or discharged into a well (such as the reinjection of co-produced water) must comply with the *Environment Protection Act 1993* and any associated policy. The injection of water containing water treatment chemicals or antibiotics, with a discharge volume greater than 50 kilolitres per day, requires an authorisation through the Environment Protection Authority.

A permit may only be granted for the draining or discharging of water to an aquifer where the applicant can provide evidence to the satisfaction of the Minister that such draining or discharging will have no negative consequence.

Will existing bore fed wetland licences be affected?

The volume of water granted to be taken under the 2009 Plan will be issued as an equivalent volume on the Water Access Entitlement (WAE) and associated water allocation. However a Site Use Approval will be issued to people using water deemed to be for bore fed wetlands. This requires the licensee to use water in accordance with the relevant wetland management plan and may require water to be applied to the site in a particular manner or at a particular rate (See section 7.8 page 71 of the Plan). Any water which cannot be used at the site will still remain property of the licensee and can be transferred or used for another purpose.

Can I have a bore fed wetland?

Subject to being granted an allocation of water under the rules of the Plan, water may be allocated from the general consumptive pool for any purpose.



WATER LICENCES

What is the separation of water rights, or the ‘new water licensing system’?

Currently licensed water users across most of South Australia have a right to access water as set out on their individual water licence. The water management authorisations have previously been combined on one document which you would have known as your water licence. A water licence authorises the use of prescribed water within a prescribed area.

The new water licensing system separates the authorisations on a licence into four separate elements:

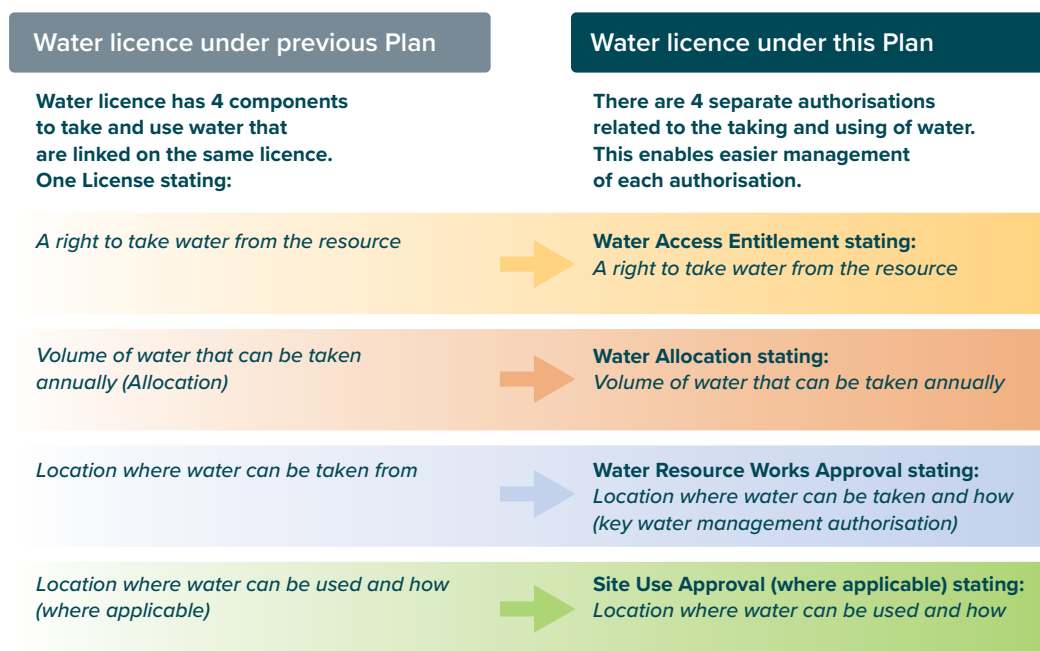
- a water access entitlement (your ongoing right to access the resource);
- water allocation (the volume of water which can be taken in a single water use year);
- water resource works approval (the sources (wells) from which you can extract water); and
- site use approval (how you can use water on land – only required in certain circumstances).

The water licence may also list the conditions for the taking of water, use and for transfer or trade.

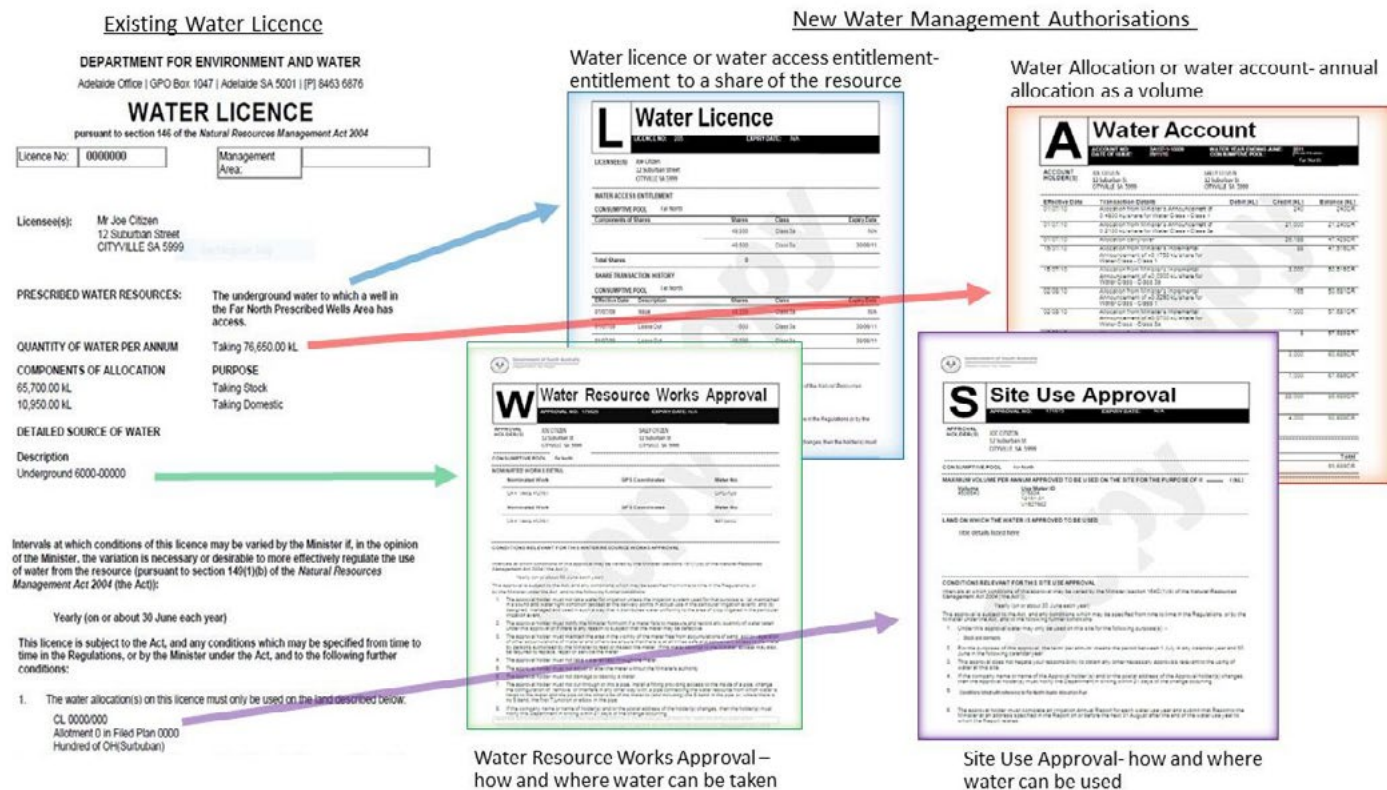
The benefits of the new water licensing system include:

- Greater opportunity for water users to secure a mortgage against their water access entitlement
- Greater flexibility in the options for managing water sustainability
- Simpler and faster process to transfer allocations and water access entitlements
- Water resource works or site use approvals can be obtained separately from the water access entitlement and allocation.

The graphic below describes the new licensing arrangements.



Water licence example



What is a Water Access Entitlement and how does it relate to an allocation?

A Water Access Entitlement (WAE) provides an entitlement to the holder of a water licence to gain access to a share of water available in the consumptive pool to which the licence relates. A WAE is an ongoing personal property right that can be bought and sold in part or full and is not linked to a particular parcel of land. Having the entitlement to access water doesn't guarantee that there is water to access – the actual volume that you have the right to use is your Water Allocation. In other SA prescribed areas this water allocation can vary from year to year to respond to seasonal or climatic influences. (An Allocation is the total quantity of water that is permitted to be taken from each consumptive pool per annum (water use year, 1 July to 30 June, same as a financial year) for a particular water licence.)

However, for licensees in the FNPWA, their allocation will be equal to their WAE for the life of the Plan as water availability does not fluctuate seasonally like in other areas such as the River Murray.

The Far North has two consumptive pools which are licenced and hence water access entitlements can be issued from, they are based on purpose of use; the Stock and Domestic Consumptive Pool and the All Purpose Consumptive Pool. Depending on what you are using water for, you may have a water licence and water access entitlement for one or more consumptive pools. The water licence is subject to conditions which relate to the taking of water from the prescribed resource.

The Plan includes two principles (Principle 8 and 10 page 53 – issuance of Water Access Entitlements), that state: "A water access entitlement will not be granted without a water resource works approval to enable the take of the water issued. The water resource works approval is subject to the principles outlined in section 7 page 61 of this Plan". This prevents speculative buying of water without a location to take the water.

Section 6 page 48 also provides more information about the separation of land and water rights and the separation of water management authorisations.

Does a licensee need a ‘water resource works approval’?

Each well (new or existing) to be used for a licensed purpose requires a water resource works approval. In addition new wells require a well construction permit. A permit grants permission to construct, operate and maintain works for the purpose of taking water.

The water resource works approval authorises the water take at a specific location and in a particular manner. This authorisation is not transferable to another location and may have conditions of approval.

What is the difference between a ‘Source’ and a ‘Resource’?

A source refers to the taking point from a particular resource (e.g. a well), while a resource relates to a particular aquifer or ‘underground water resource’ from which water is extracted by the source. To ensure the legal access of your water allocation from a specified resource the sources that you use to access water for licenced purposes are provided for on a Water Resource Works Approval.

Do I need a water licence?

If you are planning to take underground water from within the prescribed wells area, you must apply for and be granted a licence before you take water, except for a purpose which is excluded from requiring a licence under a notice issued in relation to section 105 of the Act, such as water for firefighting or road making.

Will licenses be allocated to new users?

People seeking a water licence in the FNPWA will have to apply for a licence which may be granted if their application meets the requirements of the Plan.

There is still water available for allocation in the FNPWA but it may not be able to be taken in certain parts of the prescribed area where use is already high, or there are environmental and cultural assets that need to be protected.

The rules in the Plan determine the requirements that applicants need to meet to take water from a specific location within the PWA; this is the primary function of the Plan.

Are people with existing licences protected from impact by new users?

People with existing licences are protected from impacts by new users and authorisations for new licences will only be granted where the Minister is satisfied that it will not have a detrimental impact on existing users.

I would like to irrigate a crop or pasture. Can I do this?

The Plan does not prevent the use of water for this purpose. If water is available (subject to the rules of the Plan) it may be allocated. Authorisation under other legislation may be required to undertake this type of activity in the region, for example the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*.

Will the trading of water be allowed?

Specifically, in relation to the issue of trading water rights, the Plan;

- States that a water allocation may only be transferred to another person where it remains a water allocation for the Consumptive Pool from which it was initially granted (principle 37 page 60).
- More information has been provided in section 6 page 48 of the Plan with regard to the separation of land and water rights in South Australia and the need for buyers to ensure a sale of land includes a sale of water management authorisations.

Will licensees be required to report on their water use?

All licensees will need to account for water use (principle 55b page 69). The Department for Environment and Water and the board are working on a project to consider how best to account for water in the Far North where issues like water temperature and pressure may not be suitable to the use of meters, which are used across the State to account for water. Additionally, Annual Water Use Reporting is required in some cases which requires more regular reporting on water use and salinity. Where the take of water is less than 1 ML/day or for pastoral purposes, an Annual Water Use Report is not required. The Plan also stipulates that reporting is not due until the December after the relevant water use year, to better align with other industry reporting requirements.

What monitoring will be undertaken to demonstrate that the Plan is working effectively?

Section 8.5 page 75 articulates the monitoring requirements associated with the Plan. The development of a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Plan (MERI Plan) is proposed. The board will engage with key stakeholders during the development of the MERI Plan.

Can I drill a well if I have an allocation?

The approval to drill a well is a separate process and requires a well construction permit. The requirement for a well construction permit applies whether you are in a prescribed area or not.

In order to take water from the well you will also need a water resource works approval which authorises the taking of water from the well.

If you do not have an allocation you will require an allocation before you can take the water from the well.

If it is likely that your take of water will increase beyond your current allocation, you will need to apply for an increase to your allocation. The application for allocation is subject to principles outlined in the Plan.

For water licence and well permits visit
www.environment.sa.gov.au/licences-and-permits/water-licence-and-permit-forms

What are the responsibilities as a water management authorisation holder in the Far North Prescribed Wells Area?

As a water management authorisation holder it is your responsibility to meet the conditions of your authorisations. Conditions are identified in the water allocation plan and endorsed and described on your water licence instruments.

Failure to comply with this or any other condition of your water management authorisations is a compliance breach.

Are there any other requirements that apply in the Far North Prescribed Wells Area?

In addition to your general statutory duty under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, there is also an obligation for the occupier of land on which a well is situated to properly maintain that well, including the casing, lining and screen of the well and the mechanism (if any) used to cap the well.

WHAT IS NOT PART OF THE PLAN?

Does the new Plan introduce the metering of water use?

No, but the Plan does require water use to be accounted for as a condition of a water management authorisation. Independent to the Plan, the current South Australian Licenced Water Use Metering Policy requires that licensed water must be taken through a meter approved by the Minister or in such a way that the Minister is satisfied that the taking of water is consistent with the relevant Water Accounting Implementation Plan.

The purpose of metering is to better understand and manage the volumes of water that are taken from prescribed areas.

Given it's a state-wide policy, the Plan is consistent with the South Australian Licenced Water Use Metering Policy and requires water taken from a well must be metered OR *accounted for* through an alternative method.

As part of any move to measure water use, a water accounting implementation plan will be developed at a later stage in consultation with the community. Implementation of the policy will be sufficiently flexible to recognise on-ground regional implementation issues such as high pressure and high temperature bores.

The Plan provides information regarding responsibility for managing and maintaining meters or other water accounting mechanisms, in cases where they are required. The water accounting implementation plan will provide flexibility should there be other mechanisms to account for water used.

The Plan includes:

- Principle 55b page 69 – conditions on a water resource works approval (WRWA)
- Text in section 7.2 page 63 – The management of water wells
- Additional text included in section 8.3 page 74 – Monitoring demand

It is acknowledged that metering is a complex issue for the FNPWA and further work is required to determine the best approach to water accounting. The Department for Environment and Water will develop a Water Accounting Implementation Plan, in consultation with the board and the community, which will outline the circumstances under which water accounting is not required, what water accounting mechanisms are able to be used, and how any water accounting measures will be implemented.

For information on the state-wide metering policy and other relevant policies visit
www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water/waterlicences-and-permits/metering-water-use

How are water levies determined and will they change?

Water levies are not determined by the Plan. Levies are determined by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board through its business planning process and are subject to annual review in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The Plan does not consider which water allocations will be levied or the amount of any levies that might apply.

Does BHP require a water licence for its activities at Olympic Dam and Roxby Downs?

BHP is granted a Special Water Licence under provisions in the *Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act 1982*. The terms and conditions under which water is taken pursuant to this licence (including rigorous monitoring requirements) are determined by that legislation.

What are Water Affecting Activities?

Water Affecting Activities (WAA) are activities that have the potential to have adverse impacts on water resources, water users and water dependent ecosystems. These activities include drilling a well, constructing a dam, installing a crossing in a watercourse or undertaking other works in a watercourse or lake.

Under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, the regulatory arrangements provide for the issue of permits for water-affecting activities can be required to conserve, manage and protect water resources. WAA Permits must be consistent with the policies contained within either a WAP or WAA Control Policy, however they do not overlap.

The SA Arid Lands landscape region has a WAA Control Policy to protect and manage the condition, persistence and connectivity of non-prescribed water resources in the region. However within the FNPWA all policies for ground water (the prescribed water resources), relating to permits for the drilling, repair, casing or backfilling of a well are contained with the Plan, under section 7.2 page 63 (the management of water wells).

For any activities that have the potential to impact non-prescribed water resources such as watercourses, lakes, or other surface water within the Far North the WAA principles are within *WAA Control Policy*.

Note: The relevant policies for non-prescribed groundwater outside of the FNPWA are also contained with the *WAA Control Policy*.



South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board

PO Box 297 Port Augusta SA 5700

Phone: 08 8648 5307

Email: saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au

