



Skuthorpe

Groundwater in the horticultural area

Allocation statement

November 2015



Securing Western Australia's water future

Skuthorpe is a horticultural area of approximately 1000 hectares of which 370 hectares is currently developed. Skuthorpe is located 20 km east of Broome along Broome Road. It was first developed in 1991 and comprises a series of freehold lots fronting Broome Road and corresponding leasehold lots behind a cultural and wildlife corridor.

The precinct relies solely on groundwater to support a range of horticultural enterprises. This includes growing of vegetables, melons, turf and hay, and sandalwood planted in the native pindan vegetation. Groundwater is also used for a variety of domestic, lifestyle and commercial purposes.

Through the Royalties for Regions funded Water for Food program, the Department of Water is supporting the release of an additional 683 hectares of horticultural-zoned rural land by the Department of Lands, by providing certainty about water availability and how to access it.

Groundwater is available in the Skuthorpe area to support both existing and new developments. The guidelines for proponents wishing to access water are outlined below.

Where does the water come from?

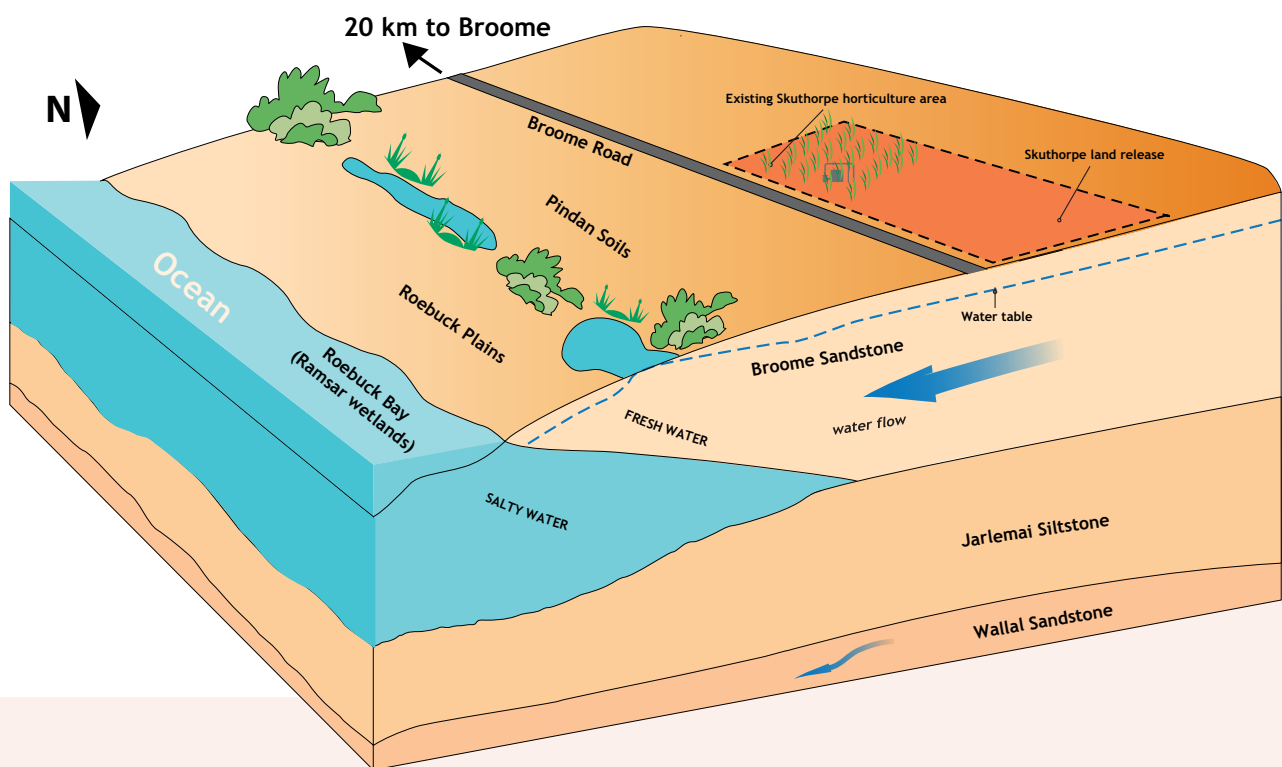
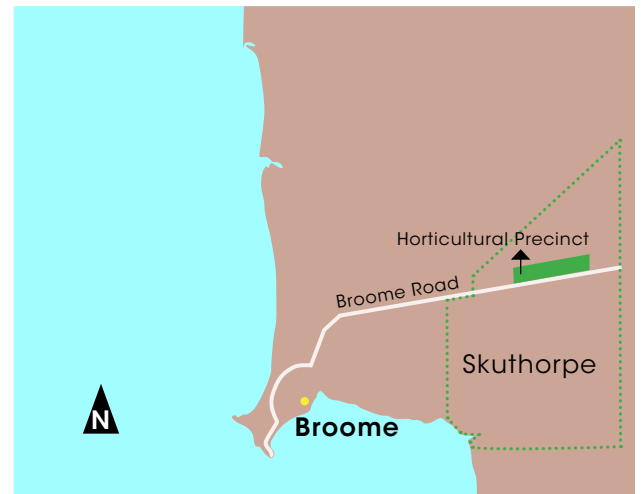
Water in Skuthorpe comes from the shallow Broome Sandstone aquifer. This is the main aquifer accessed in and around Broome and locally is of good quality (typically between 250 and 600 mg/L total dissolved solids).

The aquifer is recharged directly by large seasonal rainfall events with groundwater in the Skuthorpe area flowing from the north towards the coast.

Groundwater discharge at the coast is critical for preventing movement of the salt water interface which if unmanaged would pose significant risk to the long-term productivity and supply of groundwater.

In some locations fresh groundwater discharge at the coast also supports ecosystems of the Roebuck Plains and the Ramsar-listed Roebuck Bay.

No water is abstracted from the deeper Wallal aquifer in the vicinity of the Skuthorpe agricultural area because it is between 250 and 350 metres deep and brackish.

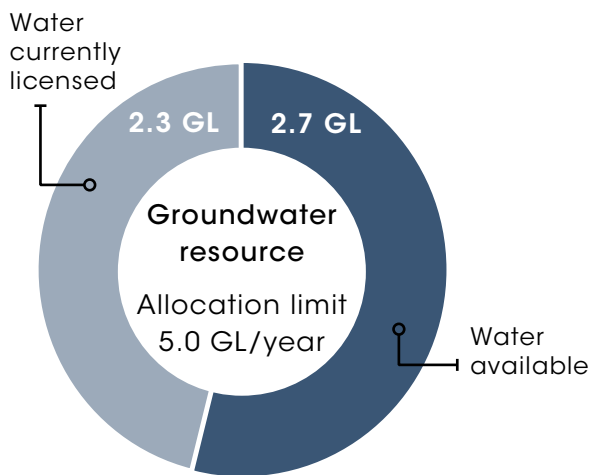


Current water availability in Skuthorpe

An allocation limit is the annual volume of water identified for consumptive use from a water resource. For the Skuthorpe subarea which includes the Skuthorpe horticulture area, we have set an allocation limit of 5.0 gigalitres per year (GL/year) for the Broome Sandstone aquifer. This will maintain a reliable supply for current users, and allow for sustainable growth in water demand.

As of October 2015, approximately 2.7 GL/year of unallocated groundwater is available in Skuthorpe.

The allocation limit was set by the department following a review of the best available hydrogeological information. This limit will ensure the resource's long-term productivity by guarding against saline intrusion, impacts on important ecosystems and other users of the Broome Sandstone aquifer. This includes Water Corporation who use the aquifer for Broome's public water supply.



Up-to-date information about water availability can be obtained by contacting our Kununurra Regional Office on (08) 9166 4166 or on the department's online Water Register www.water.wa.gov.au/maps-and-data/maps/water-register.

Trading and transferring water

If the volume of groundwater available is not enough to meet demand, we encourage proponents to seek opportunities for water trading. Information about trading can be found on our website. www.water.wa.gov.au/licencing/water-trading.

Under the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* a water licence is not automatically transferred or split between properties when land changes ownership or is sub-divided. Licensees need to contact the department prior to the sale or transfer of land to ensure that the water licence is transferred to the new owner.

How we will assess your application

Proponents can find out how we will assess your application by going to our website www.water.wa.gov.au/licencing/water-licensing.

You will also need to consider the local licensing rules below when submitting your application to access groundwater in Skuthorpe.

Accessing water in Skuthorpe

Skuthorpe is proclaimed as part of the Broome groundwater area, meaning water users require a water licence under the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* to take groundwater. Licence applicants are encouraged to access our website for comprehensive information on how to apply for a water licence www.water.wa.gov.au.

1 Requirements for hydrogeological assessment

- New and replacement production, investigation and monitoring bores may require down hole geophysical logging (including gamma and resistivity) to be carried out at the time of drilling to determine baseline water quality and geology.
- Applicants for a water licence requiring a hydrogeological assessment may be required to install one or more monitoring bores and undertake water level and quality monitoring for a period prior to the department issuing a licence to take water.

2 Water use efficiency

- Applicants for a water licence will need to demonstrate how they will maximise their water use efficiency.

3 Metering conditions

- New groundwater licences, renewals and amendments >50 000 kilolitres per year will likely require a meter.
- New groundwater licences, renewals and amendments <50 000 kilolitres per year will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- Communal bores used by multiple licensees will likely require metering at each point of off-take.

4 Monitoring conditions

- The department may include as a condition of the licence a requirement to conduct:
 - monthly meter readings
 - electrical conductivity
 - water level measurement
 - regular collection of water samples for salinity and major component analysis.
- The department may include as a condition of the licence the need to take specified actions should water quality in the well exceed a prescribed salinity trigger. This may include restrictions on take until water quality stabilises.



Future water availability

A preliminary assessment by the Department of Water has identified that up to an additional 2.0 GL/year may be available should proponents be interested in more groundwater than is currently available within the allocation limit. There may be trading opportunities within the 2.3 GL already licensed to existing users.

To access this additional water the proponent will need to undertake a detailed hydrogeological assessment and demonstrate that it can be taken without significantly impacting on other users, the ongoing productivity of the resource or important environmental values.

The assessment will likely include investigative drilling, monitoring, and groundwater modeling.

Information on the requirements of hydrogeological assessments can be found in *Operational policy no. 5.12 – Hydrogeological reporting associated with a groundwater well licence*. Specific requirements of hydrogeological assessments will be discussed with proponents once an application to take water has been made.

For further information contact our Kununurra Regional Office on (08) 9166 4100.

Monitoring the resource

The department monitors water levels at several bores in the Skuthorpe horticultural precinct. We also collect water level and water quality information from large licensees in line with their licence conditions. Collecting this resource information allows us to monitor how the resource is performing over time.

Additional monitoring will be critical for managing groundwater in the Skuthorpe area in the long-term and enabling further planning to take place, including consideration of whether additional water can be made available. We will be looking at all opportunities to put in place this monitoring through both the Royalty for Regions funded Water for Food program and working with licensees as demand increases into the future.

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