



Measuring your water take - Information sheet for licensees

What is the new policy?

Our policy on water metering and measurement is changing. From 1 February 2016, licensees will be required to measure their water take, record this information and report it to the department. The policy will be rolled out over five years and will apply to all licences to take water, except where there is minimal benefit to water management from doing so.

Why do we need to change?

The state's water resources are under pressure. Our increasing population and growing economy are placing strong demands on these water resources. Yet the amount of water available to meet our needs is declining in many areas due to the changing climate. We need to be able to accurately measure the water we take to support the long-term sustainability of our water resources.

Measurement is an essential tool in water resource management and will provide information about how much water licensees are taking in a particular area. These measurements will support our scientific knowledge of how much water is available to be taken, so we can better understand and manage the real impacts of our water use.

What are the benefits of measurement?

Measurement can bring many benefits for both licensees and water resource managers.

Benefits for licensees include:

- better understanding their water needs to support business planning and improvement (e.g. water savings can be used for expanding production or for water trading)
- for agribusiness, improving the matching and optimisation of irrigation to crop water requirements, therefore reducing costs associated with energy use, fertiliser and chemicals

- improved monitoring of pump and irrigation system performance
- allowing and accounting for trades and transfers of water entitlements
- more confidence in the allocation limits through improved management of water take and protection of water entitlement holders' rights.

Information from measurement will support sustainable water resource management and planning by:

- helping us assess how water take affects the water resource – enabling us to more accurately define allocation limits
- improving modelling and forecasting for future trends in water availability;
- ensuring licensees' water take stays within entitlements
- increasing transparency and equity in decision-making.

Who will be required to measure their water take and by when?

By 31 December 2020, all licensees will be required to measure their water take. This includes purchasing and installing measurement equipment that meets the department's guidelines and/or complies with Australian Standards (whichever is appropriate), and reading and reporting water take to the department periodically.

The policy will be rolled out in several stages. In general, larger licensees will be asked to measure their water take first, while smaller licensees will be given more time to implement the requirements. In some cases, where measurement will provide minimal benefit to water resource management, licensees may be exempt from measuring their water take.

Licensees located in higher-risk areas may be asked to measure their water at an earlier stage, where:

- water take may affect ecologically sensitive areas or other water users
- changes to the water resource have been observed
- non-compliance may be occurring.

How will the policy be implemented?

Metering or measurement?

Metering is our preferred form of measurement, and meters will be required in most instances. Most licensees that take groundwater or surface water from watercourses directly (through a pipe) will be required to meter water take, along with multiple users taking water from dams.

We will consider alternative forms of measurement in instances where metering is not appropriate, such as the taking of water from on-stream dams.

Licences requiring metering

We will use two main mechanisms to roll out metering: through licence conditions and regulations.

Initially we will amend existing water licences to include a condition to meter water take. A regulation requiring licencees to meter water take will be developed and enacted by 31 December 2017. The regulation will require metering to be implemented over a period of time according to the size of a licence.

We will proactively amend existing licences in the affected category through the licence amendment program before the regulation is gazetted. New licences will include conditions to meter unless they are exempt. This will ensure that all licences in that category are compliant with the regulation by the time it is gazetted.

By 31 December 2020, under the regulation, all licensees will be required to measure water take – unless we give an exemption. This includes all existing licences and future licence applications.

Licensed entitlement	Date when licences will be amended to include conditions to meter (in preparation for regulations)	Date when regulations are enacted requiring all licences in this category to meter water take
500 000 kilolitres per year or more	1 February – 31 December 2017	31 December 2017
New licences above 50 000 kilolitres per year	1 February – 31 December 2018	31 December 2018
Existing licences 50 000 – 499 999 kilolitres per year	1 February – 31 December 2018	31 December 2018
Existing and new licences 10 000 – 49 999 kilolitres per year	1 January 2019 – 31 December 2020	31 December 2020

Note: Some licences under 10 000 kilolitres per year may require a meter in some circumstances.

Measurement

If a licence has been exempted from the requirement to meter, we will then consider whether an alternative form of measurement is appropriate.

Appropriate forms of measurement are more likely to be applied for licensed water take from in-stream dams (where metering may not be practical) and in situations where the licensed water take requires more comprehensive monitoring (most likely in addition to metering).

Alternative forms of measurement for surface water may include dam surveys, installation of staff gauges or monitoring of water levels. For groundwater, alternative forms of measurement may include monitoring of water levels or water quality.

The timeline for implementing the requirement to measure is the same as that outlined for metering. However, the regulation will not apply to measurement. Instead, the requirement to measure will be set out in licence conditions and will be considered on a case-by-case basis when we determine a licence is exempt from the requirement to meter.

How will I know when I will be affected?

Licensees affected by the policy will be notified by the department of their requirement to measure (following the timelines outlined in the table above for each licence category).

What will happen if I don't meet the timelines?

All affected licensees are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant within the prescribed timeframes. If a licensee fails to meet the timelines, they may be subject to Compliance and Enforcement action, as outlined in the department's *Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2015*. Any affected licensee who believes that they cannot reasonably comply with the timeframes should contact the department as soon as possible.

Who will not be required to measure their water take?

Some licensees may not be required to measure their water take. We will use a risk-based approach to identify which licensees will not be required to measure their water take. In general, this will include licensees with very small entitlements, or those that will not collectively have a significant impact on a water resource. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will be based on the potential risk to the water resource, the environment or other water users.

If licensees are not required to meter or measure, licensees are still encouraged to consider the benefits of measurement to support and improve their operations.

The policy does not apply to unlicensed water take such as domestic garden bores and water users with a riparian right.

Where can I find more information?

- policy *Measuring the taking of water* available on our website
- our website <www.water.wa.gov.au>
- information brochures, including *Metering your water use 2016* and *Metering fact sheet* available on our website
- our Guidelines for water meter installation 2009
- contact your regional office, details can be found on our website or at the end of the policy *Measuring the taking of water*.