

Process to assess applications to take water



WaterNSW is responsible for managing access to water, ensuring water is shared equitably between the environment, landholders and industries.

This fact sheet outlines the steps in assessing applications to take water other than under basic landholder rights (BLR) to use for example, in irrigation. This includes both surface and groundwater.

For information on BLR (e.g. domestic and stock rights, native title rights and harvestable rights) please visit waternsw.com.au/blr

Approvals required to take water

To take water other than under BLR the following approvals are required:

Water supply works approval

to construct and operate water supply works such as pumps, dams, bores, spear points or wells. Each approval includes conditions to minimise adverse impacts.

Amend an existing approval

to make a work active or inactive, to reduce or increase a pump size, change use or increase irrigation area.

Water use approval

to use water for a particular purpose at a specific location, such as irrigation.

Combined approvals

to use water on land except for BLR and to construct and use water supply works to take water from a river or groundwater source, capture excess rainwater run-off and to store, transfer, divert or hold back water.

Further details about approvals can be found at waternsw.com.au/approvals

WaterNSW and the Department of Planning and Environment – Water (DPE – Water) each conduct thorough assessments before approving any application. The steps involved in assessing applications are outlined on the next page.

More information

For more information about the process involved in assessing applications or lodging an objection, contact our Customer Service team on 1300 662 077 or email Customer.Helpdesk@waternsw.com.au

Steps in assessing applications

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| Check & receipt | WaterNSW checks the application to ensure all relevant information has been received. The application fee also needs to be received at this time. |
| Register | The application is then registered and receives a unique reference which is supplied to the applicant. A detailed assessment commences - this may require referral to external agencies. The applicant can track the progress of their application online at wao.watersnw.com.au |
| Assess Water sharing plans (WSP) | <p>Is the application consistent with the rules and principles of the Water Management Act 2000 (WMA)?</p> <p>WaterNSW is required to consider the relevant water sharing plan (WSP) to which the application relates. WSPs may differ because of the nature of specific water source/s. Water resource plans compliment WSPs. More information can be found via the links below:</p> <p>How water sharing plans work Water resource plans in NSW</p> |
| Hydrogeological assessment (groundwater applications only) | <p>Will the application impact on the groundwater source and its dependent ecosystems?</p> <p>Potential impact of groundwater extraction is managed through DPE-Water. WaterNSW may refer the application to DPE-Water for hydrogeological assessment to ensure that no more than minimal harm will be done to any water source. For further information on how groundwater is assessed see: Assessing groundwater applications.</p> <p>WaterNSW refers applications to DPE-Water as early as possible.</p> |
| Native title | <p>Will the application impact on the individual or communal rights of Aboriginal people?</p> <p>The application is referred to Native Title Services (NTSCORP) for assessment.*</p> |
| Aboriginal heritage | <p>Will the application impact on recorded sites of archaeological and cultural heritage?</p> <p>Geographical features with cultural and spiritual significance must be protected. The application is checked against a database to ensure no sites are impacted.*</p> |
| Threatened species | <p>Will the application impact on habitat containing threatened species, flora or fauna?</p> <p>WaterNSW considers issues such as vegetation clearing and potential site damage. If special assessment is required, additional information may be required about the proposed site.*</p> |
| Contaminated land | <p>Does the application include contaminated land?</p> <p>WaterNSW checks to ensure groundwater is not affected by site contamination. Contamination may be caused by previous land use.*</p> |
| Site inspection | <p>Is a site inspection required?</p> <p>A site inspection may be required depending on how complex the application is. If an inspection is required, the applicant will be contacted by WaterNSW.*</p> |
| Advertising & objections | <p>WaterNSW is required to advertise specific application types under the WMA on the WaterNSW website at watersnw.com.au/advertising-and-objections.</p> <p>WaterNSW allows 28 days for any objections to the application to be submitted. If objections are received, WaterNSW will work with both the applicant and the objector/s to attempt to resolve any issues. Find out more at watersnw.com.au/objections or in the Prepare to lodge an objection fact sheet.</p> |
| Tracking & notification | <p>Applicants can track the progress of applications using the Water Applications Online service at wao.watersnw.com.au The application number and holder name is required to access the tracker.</p> <p>The applicant is notified in writing of the outcome of the application within 10 days of WaterNSW completing the assessment.</p> |

* There are no additional costs charged for referrals to other agencies or third parties in the assessment process – this is covered by the application fee. If issues are identified as a result of these assessments, WaterNSW will contact the applicant to discuss options. If an application is refused, the applicant can appeal to the Land & Environment Court within 28 days of receiving notification of the decision.