

Frequently asked questions – water licences and water allocations in Central Adelaide

Licences and water allocations are being issued to existing water users who applied for a water licence in the Central Adelaide Prescribed Wells Area to provide a sustainable future for the region's groundwater resources and to protect the investments made by existing users of the resource. This information will be important to existing users of the groundwater resource in this area and other key stakeholders.

What information is on my water licence?

Your water licence has a unique identification number which is referred to as a 'licence number'. Your water licence also identifies who the licence holders are and the details of your water allocation, including the volume you are limited to and the approved wells which your allocation can be taken from. A sample licence is attached for your information.

What is a water allocation?

Your water allocation is the amount of water (expressed as a volume on your licence) that you can extract from your bore/well in any given water use year (July 1st to June 30th). It is important that you stay within this limit.

There are penalties associated with taking water in excess of your authorised water allocation. Penalty rates are reviewed and published each year in the South Australian Government Gazette. For example, the following penalty rates apply for excess water use ('overuse') in the Northern Adelaide Plains Prescribed Wells Area for the 2018-19 water use year:

- \$0.46 per kilolitre for overuse for the first 10 per cent above the allocation;
- \$1.38 per kilolitre for overuse above 10 per cent and up to and including 25 per cent of the allocation; and
- \$2.53 per kilolitre for overuse above 25 per cent of allocation.

How was my allocation determined?

As an existing user, you will be issued with a water allocation(s) that aims to meet your reasonable requirements. Proposed allocations to existing users have been determined based on the scale and type of groundwater use and/or commitments to groundwater use during the establishment period (01 July 2002 to 30 November 2005). This is a requirement of the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* (the Act).

In most cases, allocations will reflect each existing users 'Total Enterprise Requirement' (discussed below).

What is a Total Enterprise Requirement (TER)?

The Total Enterprise Requirement (TER) is the total amount of groundwater that you need to operate your business, based on your water using activities during the establishment period.

To calculate TERs, a number of factors are taken into account depending on the groundwater use activities, such as:

- theoretical crop irrigation requirements or industry standards;
- management factors for the irrigated crop; and
- the capacity of existing infrastructure.

What are Climate Zones?

The Central Adelaide Prescribed Wells Area is divided into three climate zones based on Net Irrigation Requirements. The climate zone your property falls within is stated in the letter detailing your proposed water allocation. If you would like to see the location of each of the three zones visit <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/CAlicencepackage>

What are the metering requirements?

The *South Australian Licensed Water Use Metering Policy* sets out the rules associated with metering, in accordance with the *Landscape South Australia (Water Management) Regulations 2020* and the Act. This policy requires that all licensed water use is taken through an approved meter (as per the *South Australian Licensed Water Use Meter Specification*) as a default position however recognises the need to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate on-ground implementation issues.

The *Meter Implementation Plan for the Central Adelaide Prescribed Wells Area* is attached for further information regarding your requirement to meter and any flexibility provisions.

What if I don't agree with how my allocation has been determined?

Your allocation has been determined following a land and water use survey of your property and water use activities (either on site or a desktop assessment utilising aerial photography).

If you used groundwater for irrigation, areas of crop have been determined and reflect the maximum area of crop irrigated on your land during the establishment period.

If you used groundwater for commercial or industrial purposes, volumes have been determined based on industry standards and reflect use during the establishment period.

Allocations must be based on what use occurred during the establishment period in accordance with the Act.

While your reasonable requirements are based on either the crop area, industry standards, or the type of groundwater use during the establishment period, once you have received your allocation, you may use it for any purpose/area of crop.

If you have concerns regarding your allocation and how your reasonable requirement has been determined, you will need to write to the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) outlining your concerns and provide supporting documents/evidence to substantiate your claim.

What if I don't agree with my TER?

The method used to determine your TER is consistent with the approach used to determine existing user allocations for the Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges Prescribed Water Resources Areas and the Kangaroo Flat area of the Northern Adelaide Plains Prescribed wells Area, and was developed through consultation with key industry representatives. Your TER is considered to be sufficient for you to continue your water use practices and/or irrigating your crops for maximum production.

You will have the opportunity to provide DEW with additional evidence in order to support an amendment request within 36 days of the date written on your proposed allocation letter. Please outline your request for amendment using the online Water Licence Response Form.

Once your water licence has been issued, if you still do not agree with your allocation, you will have the right to appeal any aspect of your water licence with the Environment, Resources and Development Court within six weeks of the date of issue. Further information on your appeal rights will be provided with your water licence.

What if I need more than 36 days to respond to my proposed water allocation? Can I request an extension to respond?

You must advise DEW within 36 days from the date listed on your Proposed Licence Package (PLP) to discuss any changes to your proposed water allocation or licence details. As stated in your PLP extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If you do not contact DEW within 36 days your water licence will be issued as detailed in the letter.

I would like my water licence issued as per the proposed water allocation. What do I need to do?

Please advise DEW that you would like your water licence issued as per the details provided in your PLP by completing and submitting the online Water Licence Response Form.

If you require assistance please send us an email at DEW.CALicensing@sa.gov.au or call (08) 8463 6876.

If you do not contact DEW within 36 days from the date that appears on your PLP, your water licence will be issued as detailed in the letter.

When will I get my water licence?

Water licences will be issued in 2020, as soon as practical after the issue of your PLP. If additional information is provided to support a change to your proposed allocation, this information will be considered and a final allocation determined. Your water licence will then be issued to you.

What are the ongoing costs of having a water licence?

Existing users who applied for a water licence have already paid a once off application fee which will result in the issue of a water licence, including an ongoing water entitlement that does not need to be renewed.

In most other prescribed areas in South Australia, licence holders are required to pay an annual water levy based on the volume of water allocated for irrigation and commercial purposes. In other areas in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty region this levy has been set at \$0.6 cents a kilolitre (equivalent to \$6 per megalitre) of allocation.

The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board has made the decision to not apply a water levy for the Central Adelaide Prescribed Wells Area for the 2019-20 water use year.

Can I trade my allocation away or get more allocation?

A Water Allocation Plan (WAP) is a legal document which sets out the objectives and principles that apply to the transfer (permanent and temporary trade to new owners) of water licences and allocations in prescribed areas. As a WAP is under development and therefore not currently in place for your area trade will be limited to whole-of-licence transfers (for example, at the sale of a property) only. Once the WAP is adopted, trade rules will be defined and you will be able to apply to undertake a water trade.

For more information on the progress of the Adelaide Plains WAP, please contact Ms Jenny Awbery, Senior NRM Policy Officer on telephone (08) 8226 8576 or subscribe to the newsletter to stay informed by sending a request to DEW.AMLR@sa.gov.au.

More information

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