



## What is the NT *Water Act*?

### What is the Function of the *Water Act*?

The Northern Territory *Water Act* provides for the investigation, allocation, use, control, protection, management and administration of water resources.

The Minister administers the *Water Act* through the Controller of Water Resources. The Controller is responsible for the approval of permits and licences as required under this Act.

Public health control in regards to water supply or water-based recreation is not administered under the *Water Act*. This responsibility rests with the Department of Health and Families who administer the *Public Health Act* and its Regulations.

### Water Control Districts

The *Water Act* provides for the declaration of Water Control Districts in areas where there is a need for enhanced management to avoid stressing of groundwater reserves, river flows or wetlands.

Water control districts have been declared for the Alice Springs, Daly Roper, Darwin Rural, Gove Peninsula, Great Artesian Basin, Tennant Creek, Ti Tree and Western Davenport regions.

Check the following website for maps of declared Water Control Districts:  
<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/water/manage/maps.html>

### Water Allocation Plans

Water Allocation Plans can be declared under the NT *Water Act* within water control districts. These plans allocate water resources to various uses including the environment and include strategies for managing water use and improving water use

efficiency. Water allocation plans ensure water is used in a sustainable manner.

### Bore Construction

Water bore drilling and/or altering the construction of an existing bore in the NT must be undertaken by a driller licensed under the *Water Act*. A licensed driller must meet qualification requirements set by the Australian Drilling Industry Association.

A permit is required for any bore constructed or altered within a Water Control District, regardless of intended use, although mining or petroleum activities are exempt as per the *Water Act - s7(3) Application of Act to mining or petroleum activity*.

To reduce the risk of contamination there are minimum separation distances required between water bores and septic trenches or any other form of pollution. The required separation distance is usually 100m. To confirm requirements for minimum separation distances please contact the Department of Health and Families.



*A NT Government drilling team constructing a monitoring bore in the Ti Tree Water Control District*

## Water Extraction Licences

Under the Act, landholders have the right, without a licence, to take groundwater and surface water on their land for domestic purposes, wandering stock, and for irrigating a domestic garden of up to 0.5 hectares.

Excluding water used for stock and domestic purposes as described above and water use for mining or petroleum activities, a Water Extraction Licence is required in the following circumstances:

- When extracting surface water from any waterway which includes rivers, creeks, dams, watercourses, swamps, lakes and lagoons
- When extracting groundwater from a bore that is equipped to extract water at a rate of 15 litres per second or more;

Some exemptions to these requirements apply within some Water Control Districts. Please contact the water resources branch about specific licensing requirements in your area.

## Waste Management

It is an offence under the Water Act to dispose of waste underground via a bore or discharge waste into a waterway without a Waste Disposal or Waste Discharge Licence.

The Water Act provides for the declaration of Beneficial Uses which describe the purpose of use for which water quality should be maintained. These declarations are considered in making decisions about issuing waste discharge licences.

The beneficial use categories are:

- Agriculture
- Aquaculture
- Public water supply
- Environment
- Cultural
- Manufacturing industry
- Rural Stock & Domestic.

### Agriculture



Cultural



Environment



Public Water Supply

## Water Resources Branch

Our Branch has offices in Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs. We can assist you with applications for permits and licenses, as well as a list of licensed drillers.

A copy of the NT Water Act is available at: [www.nt.gov.au/nreta/water/legislation/](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/water/legislation/)

### Further Information:

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