

Alice Springs

Water Resource Strategy 2005

Beneficial Uses

Declaring Beneficial Uses is a process that provides legal recognition of the values of a water resource and determines how water may be used, managed and protected. The community has a key role in deciding which Beneficial Use categories apply to a given water resource. It is important that a broad cross-section of the community is involved in the process of determining Beneficial Uses. The declaration of Beneficial Uses should equitably and accurately represent community views and aspirations for the use, management and protection of our water resources.

The term Environmental Values is sometimes used to describe Beneficial Uses, particularly in other states. The two terms can be used interchangeably.

NT Water Act 1992

The management and protection of the Northern Territory's water resources is controlled under the Water Act 1992. The [Water Act](#) defines Beneficial Use categories for the Northern Territory.

Beneficial Use Categories



Environment – to provide water to maintain the health of aquatic ecosystems;



Cultural – to provide water to meet traditional cultural needs, as well as aesthetic and recreational needs;



Public Water Supply – to provide source water for drinking purposes delivered through community water supply systems;



Agricultural - to provide irrigation water for primary production including related research;



Industry – to provide water for industry, including secondary industry and a mining or petroleum activity (includes irrigation of parks and ovals)



Rural stock and domestic – to provide water for the purposes of drinking water for grazing stock; and for self managed domestic supplies.



Aquaculture – to provide water for commercial production of aquatic animals including related research;



Water resources are allocated according to Beneficial Uses

In the Alice Springs Water Resource Strategy, consumptive water use will be allocated according to the Beneficial Use categories. A Beneficial Use must first be declared prior to any allocation determined for any particular use. An entitlement to extract water for any particular purpose is then provided through Water Extraction Licences, which are issued for particular Beneficial Uses.

Beneficial Uses provide a legal mechanism to protect waterways and water resources

The use of connected catchments and aquifers must not be detrimental to Beneficial Uses that have been declared for a water resource. For example the declaration of environmental or cultural use requires that consumptive use of water (eg. agriculture) does not have a adverse impact on cultural or environmental values.

Water quality may also be protected through the mechanism of Beneficial Uses. Water resources that have Public Water Supply declared as a Beneficial Use should satisfy the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. In this example water allocation and management should ensure that water quality is not detrimentally impacted in a way that reduces its value for drinking water. The Planning Act requires Beneficial Uses to be taken into account in development decisions.

Beneficial Uses at work – Ilparpa Swamp

Beneficial Uses for Ilparpa Swamp were established through a community consultation process involving a public meeting and community survey. The community identified Environmental and Cultural use as priority values of the area, which were subsequently declared as Beneficial Uses under the Water Act.

As a result of the declaration of Beneficial Uses an active program to rehabilitate the swamp was initiated. Power and Water Corporation were required to apply for a 'Waste Discharge Licence' in order to continue discharging overflows from the sewerage treatment ponds into Ilparpa Swamp. The licence contains conditions designed to protect the environmental and cultural Beneficial Uses for the swamp. Licence conditions include funding and implementing the Ilparpa Swamp Rehabilitation Plan, water quality monitoring, and ceasing dry weather overflows by December 2005. An application for extension of this date is currently being considered.



Ilparpa Swamp is actively managed to protect Environmental and Cultural values declared as Beneficial Uses under the Water Act

This is a practical example of where Beneficial Uses have been applied as a mechanism to facilitate improved environmental management.

Have your say about Beneficial Uses

Click here to link to [Beneficial Uses questions](#) in the Alice Springs Water Resources Strategy submission form, or download the submission form from www.alicewaterplan.nt.gov.au , or contact

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