

# Questions and Answers on Bore Metering Project

## What is this project about?

The aim of the bore metering project is to obtain more information on how much water is consumed in the Darwin rural area (Litchfield Shire) and the Daly region, so the Northern Territory Government can better manage water resources.

Obtaining this bore water consumption information will allow for improved planning through analysis of “real data”. Improved planning will ensure the Darwin rural and Daly regions will continue to have water now and into the future.

At the moment large water users (land owners with bores that pump more than 15 litres per second), require a licence under the *Northern Territory Water Act*. These large users are required to meter, record and report their water use. However, currently there are no standards for such meters, meaning that the information the NT Government collects from these water users is not always reliable.

Small water users (land owners with bores that pump between 2 and 15 litres per second) are not legally required to have a meter under the *Northern Territory Water Act*. This metering project will not change this arrangement. However, as there is currently no metering on these small users, there is no information on overall water use. Without this knowledge, when a water allocation plan is implemented, it will be difficult to ensure smaller users will be allocated access to the water they require.

This project seeks volunteers to have meters installed on their bores, free of charge, to monitor water use in the Darwin rural area and Daly region, so we can more accurately estimate overall water use.

You can't make good decisions about the future without good information about the present – that is what this project is all about.

## Who can volunteer?

Volunteers representing a range of bore water consumers will be sought. This includes owners of bush blocks with minimal garden to large horticultural enterprises. This spectrum will enable a more accurate estimation of overall bore water use to be made, and in turn, better planning to ensure we have water for the future.

## Who will pay for the meters?

The installation of bore meters, to suitable bores, is at no cost to the property owner. The meters installed will be fitted to Australian Standards and are purchased through the Water Smart Australia program, which is funded by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

This project will require land owners to volunteer to have 200 bore meters installed in the Darwin rural area and 100 bore meters in the Daly Region. The volunteers will be requested to provide regular meter readings to ensure accurate water usage across the year is measured.

## Will metering my bore mean that I will be charged for water?

No. The NT Government has no intention of charging for private water use from bores – now or into the future.

The NT Government is well aware of the significant investment that rural landholders have made in constructing and maintaining a bore. Our job is to help you protect that investment by ensuring your bore continues to pull water.

The only way the NT Government can ensure this occurs is to have improved and accurate data on how much water is being collectively pumped. This way we can ensure that there is water for now and the future – both for us and the environment.

## How does metering help secure water for the future?

Managing our water resources means understanding:

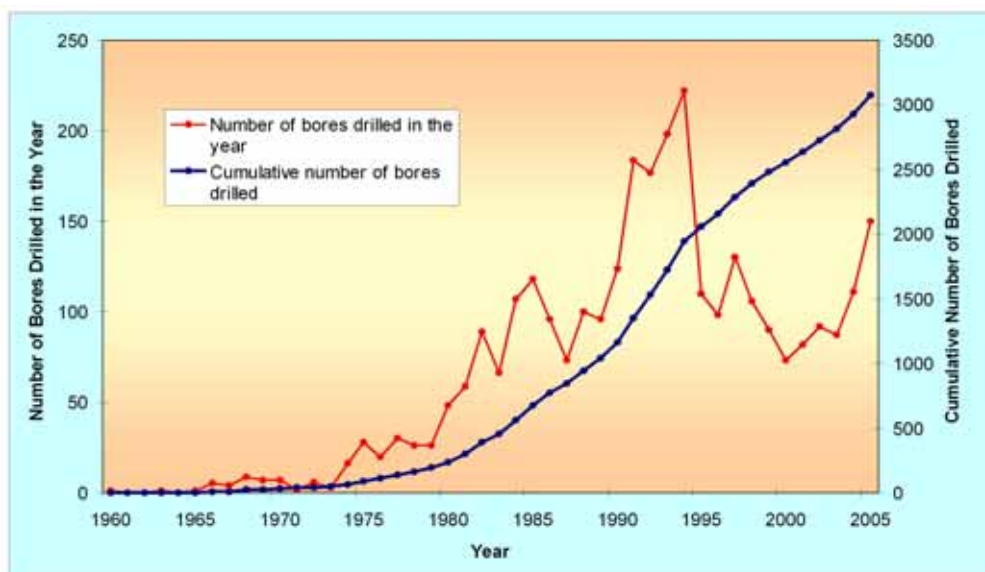
- how much water is stored in the ground
- how much is replenished each year through rainfall; and
- how much is used from natural and man-made processes.

Currently, NT Government scientists have a solid understanding of how big our water resources are and how rainfall recharges the water in the ground. However, the missing piece of the puzzle is – how much water are we using?

In a way, our water resources are a bit like a tank that is constantly being filled through rainfall. However, at the same time it's constantly being emptied by pumping, use by native vegetation and evaporation.

If we want to make sure the tank doesn't run dry then it is no good just looking at what goes in, we must also know how much is going out – this is why metering and obtaining current data is important for future planning.

**Bores in the Darwin Rural Area**



Source: Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, 2006

In 1960 there were less than 100 bores in the dolomite aquifers in the Darwin rural (most of Litchfield Shire) area. Today there are more than 3000 bores in these aquifers and more than 5000 bores in the general area. The NT Government only wants to install meters on 200 bores out of a total of 5000 bores in the Darwin rural area.

### **Once we have the information from metering – what next?**

Metering information will be used in computer models that aim to replicate the natural processes affecting water resources. Using these models, scientists and resource managers can make predictions as to how current and possible future water use affects the overall water resource.

This is then the basis for developing, with community input, a water allocation plan that establishes the proportion of the resource that needs to go to the environment and how much is available for consumption by residents and rural industries.

### **If water levels fall will the NT Government frame the allocation plan so that I can't water my garden or wash my car – like it is down south?**

No. These sorts of water restrictions are what we are trying to avoid. The NT Government certainly encourages water conservation – no one wants to see water wasted - but the top end Territory lifestyle is built around tropical gardens and the swimming pool.

The allocation plan will ensure that sufficient water for rural residential use is locked in when the overall "water pie" is carved up. Other consumptive uses will be targeted for restrictions, should there be a need to reduce water usage, in response to a series of poor wet seasons.

### **When will the metering start?**

Metering will start by the commencement of the dry season in 2007. At the moment the NT Government is calling for volunteers to have bore meters installed, determining standards for the meters and how they should be located and installed, so we get the best possible information.

The metering project, for the collection of bore water use data, will last for two years once metering commences. When the project is complete volunteers can either request the meter be removed free of charge, or keep the meter, at no cost to the landowner.

### **Will there need to be metering after this project finishes?**

Small non-licensed water users (between 2-15 litres per second) who volunteer to have a bore meter will be under no obligation to continue metering water use after the project finishes. Large (licensed) water users already require a meter and will continue to do so under improved arrangements, after this project is finished.

### **I want to volunteer for a meter – who do I contact?**

To register your interest in having a free bore meter installed contact the Water Management Branch on:

Telephone: 8999 4611

Email: [water.nreta@nt.gov.au](mailto:water.nreta@nt.gov.au)

Website: <http://www.nt.gov.au/boremeter>