

Water compliance news

Good afternoon

The latest COVID-19 lockdown may have prevented us from getting out on farm in the last few weeks, but we have nevertheless managed to complete our metering compliance campaign. My team at the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) visited almost every property with works affected by the new metering regulations before the lockdown kicked in.

Water users needed to have achieved compliance by 1 December 2020, or showed they were moving in that direction. We are encouraged to see progress has been made, but more needs to be done to ensure water take is accurately accounted for in NSW. Our objective is clear: to ensure the vast majority of licensed water take is effectively metered and to make sure those meters are accurate, tamperproof, and auditable.

Continue reading for more details about our metering compliance campaign as well as our regulatory focus for the 2021-22 water year and some of our recent prosecutions.

I hope you are all keeping safe and well during the extended lockdown and we look forward to a time when we can meet again.



Grant Barnes
Chief Regulatory Officer
Natural Resources Access Regulator

Compliance with new metering regulations



Our statewide inspections found 23 per cent of water works were fully compliant and another 32 per cent were part of the way there, having taken steps to comply.

We are taking enforcement action after finding 45 per cent of affected pumps were still not fitted with an accurate meter.

A deadline of 1 December 2020 applied to all pumps 500mm and above, requiring that they have installed tamper proof, accurate or pattern approved meters that are independently certified by a duly qualified person.

We are encouraged by the progress that has been made, but there is more work to be done to ensure for accurate measurement and reporting of water take in NSW.

Water users in the northern inland region of the state are subject to the metering framework's next deadline, which is less than five months away, on December 1.

All works, including pumps above 100mm and bores above 200mm in the Macquarie, Gwydir, Namoi, Border Rivers and Barwon-Darling regions must be properly metered by this deadline.

[Read more](#)

Our new regulatory focus areas



Water meters, irrigated agriculture, exceeding extraction limits, and the protection of groundwater sources are the key issues on our regulatory radar this year.

The setting of these priority areas means we can more effectively concentrate our resources as it builds public confidence in the sound management of water in NSW.

Non-urban water meter reform is the top priority, and one of the most significant changes to water management in NSW in recent decades. Under these reforms water users must install accurate meters for pumps above a certain size or must show they are making a genuine effort to comply.

The irrigated agriculture industry will also get special attention this year to ensure growers remain within the rules. Farms like these are often among the highest water users in a region.

Making sure water users do not exceed their allocation will come under even greater scrutiny this year with increased inspections and cross checking of licence and approval data.

Extraction from groundwater sources through bores, wells, spearpoints or excavation will be the fourth area of focus for us. Underground water is a fragile resource, and frequently the base for complex water-dependent ecosystems. Setting and enforcing limits on water take from this source is critical to long term sustainability.

[Find out more](#)

Oberon landholder to face court



The public's desire for water law to be properly enforced and managed has been highlighted by a new prosecution due to come before Lithgow Local Court in

August.

The case involves an Oberon landholder who allegedly took water for domestic and stock purposes from a water source without an access licence between October 1, 2019, and 31 October 2019. It was during a period of severe drought when water scarcity was a serious problem for the entire community.

The alleged incidents came to our attention because of community complaints that the landholder was not entitled to the water as he did not have river frontage.

NRAR issued a penalty notice to the man, who has elected to have the matter heard in court.

Recent news



Griffith landholder held to account

Maximum penalties exceeding \$500,000 for each offence could apply if a Griffith-based landholder is found guilty of extracting too much water on two separate occasions.

The landholder is accused of exceeding their water allocation by a total of 1350 megalitres - equivalent to water needed to fill 540 Olympic swimming pools. The case is due to be heard in the NSW Land and Environment Court.

[Read more](#)



Narrabri-based landholder charged

A Narrabri landholder has been charged with allegedly taking 1200ML of water over their extraction limit – equivalent to water needed to fill more than 480 Olympic sized swimming pools.

The alleged breaches took place over a three-year period, and the matter is listed to be heard in the Narrabri local court on 17 August 2021.

[Read more](#)



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Aboriginal Support Network (ASN)

This year's NAIDOC Week theme was 'Heal Country' which called for greater protection of traditional lands, waters, sacred sites and cultural heritage from exploitation, desecration, and destruction.

Marcus Leslie, Gomeri man and Team Leader of Compliance Monitoring, says this year's theme was not dissimilar to the objectives of the ASN, which he helped form.

"Any outcome that's working towards conserving, protecting, and enhancing Aboriginal culture, land and water, particularly our spiritual connections, our values and uses connected to water, is important. The network helps Aboriginal staff be included in conversations about water, giving us a platform to contribute and add value," Mr Leslie said.

Alongside helping Aboriginal members to realise their potential as leaders within water management, the network also helps NRAR carry out its functions in a culturally sensitive way that respects Aboriginal values.

During NAIDOC Week NRAR's first Aboriginal board member and proud Gomeri man, Phil Duncan, took network members to Myall Creek for a guided tour with Gamilaraay elder, Kelvin Brown.

"Myall Creek is a historically and culturally significant site for Aboriginal people that tells a confronting story of our history on this land," Mr Duncan said.

"Our people were massacred here in 1838 while unarmed. It's an unpleasant event but we must come to terms with our history before we can embrace our future."

[Read more](#)

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