



Statement of response

This statement is a summary of the Department of Water's responses to comments received on the Draft Cockburn Groundwater Area water management plan. All comments were considered when finalising the Cockburn Groundwater Area water management plan.

Executive summary

An invitation to comment was advertised in the local newspaper on 22 May 2007. A number of key industry and local government stakeholders were provided with a copy of the document for review. The plan was open for public comment for a period of six weeks. One response was received, covering a variety of issues, including licensing and monitoring requirements; water availability and security; and the importance of managing impacts on the water resource.

Table 1 summarises the main issues raised.

Table 1 Comments received on the Draft Cockburn Groundwater Area water management plan

Comment or request

Department of Water response

Monitoring and metering of private bores

The respondent requested that the Department of Water be responsible for the maintenance and monitoring of private bores.

The respondent supported that meters could be read by the land user and submitted to the Department of Water. The respondent requested random periodic checks.

Almost all development, industry and infrastructure within the CGA depend on groundwater for their respective water supply needs. Those that benefit from using the resource also have a responsibility to help manage the water, which is why all water users (including existing users) are required to comply with a groundwater monitoring regime established through licence conditions.

Licensees will be required to read their meters monthly, record the volume of groundwater pumped from each bore at the close of each month, and submit the information to the department one month after the end of the water year (by 31 July each year) as stated in Section 5.5.5 of the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (RIWI Act).

The department will use this information, together with the water



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level and quality information, to assist in managing the regional impact of groundwater abstraction on the water resources of the Cockburn Groundwater Area. The information collected will be used to provide further calibration of the Perth Regional Aquifer Modelling System, as per Section 3.6.

Officers of the department will conduct water use surveys to determine whether the licensee is using their allocation in accordance with their licence conditions. If a licensee is not using all the authorised allocation, the licensee will be asked to explain why the allocation should not be reduced at the time of licence renewal to better reflect current use and near future requirements (Section 5.5.4).

As users of the water resource, the maintenance of meters is the responsibility of the licensee, because it supports the security of their supply. The meter provides evidence of water abstraction, impacts on them or other users, use for licensing requirements, and use for future trading purposes.

Extenuating circumstances

The respondent requested a process that provided an opportunity for altering existing bores at critical times to minimise a loss of production.

Section 5.2.2 has been updated to reflect this. In an urgent situation where a new or replacement bore, or an alteration to a bore, is required to minimise loss of production, the Kwinana Peel region will consider 26D applications in priority. The applicant would need to make the region aware that the construction work is critical. This applies to 26D license applications only. Applications to amend 5C licenses would need to be treated on an 'as-received basis', for equity reasons.

Establishment of an advisory group

The respondent recommended the establishment of a Cockburn Groundwater Area water resource management committee be a priority.

At this stage, the department is investigating the establishment of a local water resource management committee.

Issue of groundwater licences

The respondent requested that the department keep abreast of all information and data to minimise exploration costs to the applicant, particularly if there is little chance of attaining a water licence.

As per the *State-wide Policy No 17 — Timely Submission of Required Further Information*, the department is required to consider several matters, including whether the proposed water use is in the public interest, is ecologically sustainable, is environmentally acceptable, may prejudice other current or future needs for water, or may have a detrimental effect on another person. To properly



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The respondent identified that the data collection should be the responsibility of the department now that water licence fees are in place.

assess these matters, the department is empowered to request further information as part of the application. The department will assess licence applications according to the requirements of the RIWI Act and the Rights in Water and Irrigation Regulations 2000. The department gives no guarantee that a licence to take water (under Section 5C of the RIWI Act) will be issued at the completion of the assessment. The department will make available appropriate information to applicants.

All funds raised from water licence fees will be used solely for water licensing administration within the Department of Water. The cost of water resource investigations as implied is not covered by licensing fees.

Reallocation of entitlement

The respondent requested that unused allocation of water should be recouped only when the aquifer is fully allocated.

As per Section 5.5.4, officers of the department will survey water use to determine whether the licensee is using their allocation in accordance with their licence conditions. If a licensee is not using all the authorised allocation, the licensee will be asked to explain why the allocation should not be reduced at the time of licence renewal to better reflect current use and near future requirements.

Where existing entitlements remain unused for a significant period of time as identified in the department's *State-wide Policy No 11 — Management of Unused Licensed Water Entitlements (November 2003)*, or the applicant proposes to reduce their allocation, then the water may be recouped. Recouped water may become available for re-allocation to consumptive use or to the environment.

Renewal of existing licences

The respondent considers that it is not the responsibility of the licence holder to renew their licence now that licence fees are being charged.

The department will endeavour to notify licence holders in advance that their licence will expire soon. However, it is the licence holders' responsibility to extend the term of the existing licence before the expiry date. This is similar to other licences (i.e. drivers' licence).

When a licence to take water is due to expire and the licensee has abided by all the licence conditions, the licence will often be extended for a further period. However, if an application for a licence to take water expires and the licensee has not abided by all the licence conditions, including not letting it lapse, there is no guarantee that the term of the licence will be extended automatically.



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Acid sulfate soils

The respondent questions why it is the applicant who must undertake testing for acid sulfate soils.

It is in the interest of the applicant that testing for acid sulfate soils is completed, as the generation of acid may have a significant impact on property and the activities of the applicant (Section 5.3.5). The Department of Environment and Conservation's *Acid Sulfate Soil Management Series* provides information to applicants about possible risk.

Development plans and operating strategies

The respondent requested clarity on when the department will request a development plan and operating strategy.

As per Section 5.5.6, operating strategies and staged development plans will be requested if the taking of water may impact environmental values or other water users; the volume of water to be taken is significant; the water resource being accessed requires stringent management; the water is abstracted from several sources; and if in the opinion of the department it is necessary in order to fulfil requirements of RIWI Act.

Questions

What is the public comment period?

Plans are released in draft form for a period of time, which varies from six weeks to three months, to allow the public, stakeholders and peak bodies to provide comment on the water management plan. The water management plan is available in electronic form on the department's website and in hard copy from the local department office. The public comment period is advertised in local papers and through a letter directly to peak bodies. A request was received to extend the comments period for this plan for a further two weeks to allow time for additional comments. No other comments were received during this time.

Why isn't the department involved in turf industry research?

The department, in its previous entity as the Waters and Rivers Commission, was a driver in the development of the Turf Research Facility with the University of Western Australia. The department has continued its involvement by contributing financially and as a representative on the steering committee. Currently, the department is contributing financial assistance to the university research project, 'Identifying and managing water repellency in turfgrass grown in sandy soils'.



The department's current focus for research in the Cockburn area is on estuarine and water catchment remediation projects, and ongoing exploration and investigation of the state's groundwater resources.

List of respondents

One individual responded to the draft management plan.

What next?

These responses and comments were considered when finalising the *Cockburn Groundwater Area water management plan*. The plan is available from the department's website (www.water.wa.gov.au). It provides information on how the Cockburn Groundwater Area water resource is managed by the department through licensing, assessment, reporting and policy.

Further Information

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