

# Update on the Review of the Katherine Tindal Water Allocation Plan

# Highlights

- » New Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer, Katherine declared 6 April 2016 following mid-term (5 year) review
- » Katherine Water Advisory Committee met six times between January 2015 and July 2015 to inform and guide the department in its review of the plan
- » The new plan is effective until the Plan renewal date, August 2019

# What the committee considered

- » Reported water usage by licence holders
- » Trends in water demands for Stock and Domestic use
- » Overview of Monitoring and Research activities on the Katherine River 2009-2014, including:
  - Surface water flow and groundwater level monitoring
  - Pesticide and herbicide assessment of the Katherine River
  - Fish diversity and abundance research
  - Water quality trends

# Review Outcomes

- » Overall, the Plan has provided a reasonable framework for the sustainable management of the Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer
- » The Plan would benefit from some amendments to:
  - better recognise increased stock and domestic water demand arising from growth in rural subdivision since 2009
  - better reflect water entitlements for each licence security category following appeals to licence decisions in 2009
  - Clearly specify how announced allocation extraction limits are applied to licence security categories

# Review Outcomes cont...

- » The review identified ways to encourage more trading of water entitlement through improved communication of trading rules
  - importantly, the committee noted that trade need not be on a commercial basis and whilst supportive of this, identified that trade may occur on a cooperative basis, between parties
- » The committee reiterated the importance of making ongoing provision for the allocation of 680 ML annual water entitlement if Native Title is recognised within the life of the plan
- » Identified improvements to rules for amending and renewing licences to make the process fairer and more flexible

# What's changed?

- » Increased the allocation of water for rural stock and domestic and other small groundwater uses from 1,128ML/yr to 1,300ML/yr (Clause 22)
- » Increased the limits to licences to align with the water entitlements currently issued through all licences granted in the Tindall Limestone Aquifer, Katherine (Clause 24)
- » Increased the maximum annual extraction limit for very wet years to 38,391ML/year and extended Table 3 to include more detailed extraction limit breakdown against predicted dry season flows (Clause 30)

# What's changed? Cont...

- » Provided a clearer definition and explanation of the rules applying to water trading and the relevant administrative and approvals process (Clause 34);
- » Revised wording of to include the ongoing provision for the allocation of 680 ML annual water entitlement should the existence of Native Title be recognised within the lifetime of the plan (Clause 35) ;
- » Revised rules for amending and renewing licences (Clause 37)
- » Template for Groundwater Extraction Licences (Additional schedule 8)

# Looking ahead to the 2019 Review

- Integrate water allocation planning for Tindall Aquifer - Katherine River - Ooloo Aquifer - Daly River water
- Ensure regional mining and energy developments are included in water allocation planning
- Continue baseline surface water, groundwater and water quality monitoring to inform future resource management and protection
- Develop simpler, more efficient water trading system - including temporary pool of annual allocations that are not required
- Encourage rainwater tanks on rural lots to reduce demand on the aquifer
- Meter all groundwater extractions