

2020 Announced Allocation Decision

Darwin Rural Water Control District - Groundwater Extraction Licences

Groundwater extraction licences in the Darwin Rural Water Control District (DRWCD) are granted subject to annual announced allocation conditions. These conditions allow me, as the Controller of Water Resources, to reduce licensed water entitlements annually, to protect the environmental, cultural and social values associated with water resources.

In determining whether to make an announced allocation, resulting in a reduction of licensed water entitlements for the 2020 water accounting year, I considered the following matters:

1. The Department's monitoring bores in the DRWCD indicate that groundwater levels are approximately the same or higher than levels recorded at this time last year.
2. There is a high proportion of water use in the DRWCD that is not required to be licensed, which is not subject to annual announced allocations. Accordingly, exercising the power to make an announced allocation in the DRWCD would place an unequal responsibility to reduce water extraction on the small percentage of licensed water users.
3. Approximately 20 per cent of licensed groundwater entitlements is for the beneficial use of public water supply, which is not subject to annual announced allocations.
4. Approximately 75 per cent of licensed groundwater entitlements support agricultural and aquaculture production. Given the current employment challenges and disruption to global supply chains, supporting local food production and agricultural jobs is critical.
5. Water extraction licensing for the large majority of operators in the DRWCD has only been required since July 2016 and some licensees are still progressing with the installation of meters, which is necessary to appropriately monitor and report licensed water extraction.

For these reasons, I have formed the opinion that making an annual announced allocation for the 2020 water accounting year is neither necessary to protect the environmental, cultural or social values of water, nor likely to reduce overall groundwater extraction in the DRWCD.

Accordingly, I have determined not to reduce licensed groundwater entitlements through the annual announced allocation licence condition. Therefore, all groundwater extraction licence holders in the DRWCD are permitted to extract 100 per cent of their maximum licensed entitlement for the 2020 water accounting year, which commences on 1 May 2020.



Joanne Townsend

Controller of Water Resources

17 April 2020