



## Changes to Water Licensing in New South Wales

The *Water Management Act 2000 (Act)* was created to better protect and manage New South Wales' water resources.

The provisions dealing with basic landholder rights commenced on 1 January 2001. Those provisions deal with such matters as:

1. rights for water for domestic and stock needs from rivers and groundwater;
2. harvestable rights;
3. native title rights; and
4. the process for developing water sharing plans.

From 1 July 2004 the Act replaces the water licensing system implemented under the *Water Act 1912* with a new licensing system. The new licensing system will apply to areas covered by water sharing plans. As of 2003 35 statutory water sharing plans were gazetted covering over 80% of water extraction in New South Wales.

The remainder of the water licences in New South Wales will continue to be managed under the *Water Act 1912*.

The new water sharing plans define the water sharing arrangements between the environment and water users. The provisions of the new water sharing plans include:

1. regulating the amount of water available for extraction between different categories of water access licence;
2. all existing licences that authorise the taking of water from a water sharing plan will automatically convert to water access licences and approvals under the Act;
3. new public registers will be available which list entitlements under the Act; and
4. water access licences will be separate from land ownership so that a person purchasing land supplied by a water access licence will need to separately purchase the water access licence;

Some of the aspects of the new licensing system include:

1. licences will continue without a need for a renewal (unlike licences under the *Water Act 1912*);



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2. water access licences will define a share in the water available in a specific water source rather than as a volume per year amount;
3. water access licences are fully tradeable (within the rules of the relevant water sharing plan); and
4. water access licences can be more effectively used as security for loans.

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