



Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy

Fact Sheet 4

Domestic and stock water

The dry conditions of the last 12 years have highlighted areas for better water management during long, severe droughts.

Water uses that were once insignificant now make up a larger proportion of total consumption, such as domestic and stock water which can affect the reliability of supply for other users and the environment.

The Strategy aims to ensure rights to water are secure and well managed with clear rules.

What is changing

People currently can take water for domestic and stock use from a waterway, aquifer or farm dam free of charge and without a licence. The Strategy introduces measures to improve understanding and management of this use by:

- ↘ requiring registration of new domestic and stock dams in rural residential areas (see Chapter 4)
- ↘ developing guidelines for reasonable domestic and stock use so that scarce water supplies are used more sustainably
- ↘ assessing the implications of the draft Murray-Darling Basin Plan due in 2010 on Victoria's approach to managing domestic and stock water use.

Registering new dams

Domestic and stock dams in rural residential lifestyle areas will need to be registered with the relevant rural water corporation before being constructed or altered. Some councils already require a permit to build a new dam.

Registration will:

- ↘ provide accurate information to monitor and assess the growth in domestic and stock dams
- ↘ help determine the size of dam required to meet 'reasonable' domestic and stock needs and ensure any other applicable requirements (such as a construction licence) are obtained
- ↘ make sure landholders are advised about the most efficient capture and use of water for their needs, including alternative supplies available.

Guidelines for 'reasonable' use

Guidelines for domestic and stock use will help calculate water needs based on the property area, local climatic conditions, stocking rate, reliability of water supplies and water needs of a typical household.

This will be an important tool for property owners' planning and for local councils, water corporations and catchment management authorities when assessing water supply needs for new developments and properties.

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Reviewing domestic and stock water management

The Strategy's actions will be reviewed by 2011 to:

- assess any implications of the draft Murray-Darling Basin Plan on Victoria's management of domestic and stock water
- consider the growth of domestic and stock use in resource-stressed areas
- gauge the effectiveness of the guidelines for 'reasonable' use in promoting efficient use of available water.

The Minister for Water will appoint a steering committee to review and report on Victoria's domestic and stock water management.

What happens if we do nothing – a future with less water

Domestic and stock water once accounted for only a small proportion of total water use.

However enduring dry conditions and growth in lifestyle properties mean more domestic and stock water is now being used, and this is impacting on the reliability of supply for existing users and the environment.

Growth in domestic and stock use is expected to continue alongside burgeoning rural residential areas, and this could undermine the reliability of water supplies for all users through:

- the cumulative impact of historically uncontrolled use at the catchment scale
- an increase in volumes of water taken for domestic and stock use
- an inability to estimate the impact on overall water availability because of a lack of reliable data.

Figure 4.1 - Domestic and stock dams in the Mt Ida sub-catchments, Campaspe Basin (aerial photograph)

a) As a rural setting in 1982



b) As a peri-urban subdivision in 2008



Source: Coordinated Imagery Program, Department of Sustainability and Environment