

Victoria's new approach to domestic and stock water use

The Victorian Government has announced new statewide policy that improves the management of domestic and stock water use through:

1. requiring the registration with the local rural water corporation of all new or altered domestic and stock dams within rural residential areas
2. promoting sustainable use in accordance with 'guidelines for reasonable domestic and stock use'
3. committing to further review Victoria's approach to domestic and stock management after the release of the draft Murray-Darling Basin Plan in late 2010.

These actions were announced with the release of the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy.

For more information see www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/sws/northern/final

Registering your dam

If you have a property within a rural residential area, new Government policy requires you to register your new or altered dam with your rural water corporation.

A rural residential area is any property:

- located within the rural living zone, green wedge zones and any residential zone as defined by Victoria's Planning Schemes; or
- that is 8ha (20acres) or smaller.

Existing dams within these areas do not need to be registered unless they are being altered.

Registration of your new/altered stock and domestic dam will:

- provide an accurate record of the location and nature of new domestic and stock use and ensure it is recognised in the future if any new regulatory measures are introduced
- ensure dams do not exceed the capacity required to meet 'reasonable domestic and stock' needs and address all construction standards; and
- improve information sharing between prospective users and the water corporation before a dam or bore is constructed, including advice on alternative water supplies.

This information will be stored in the Victorian Water Register. Registering your dam will not incur any ongoing fees but an initial administrative charge will apply.

What is domestic and stock water?

Water used exclusively for domestic and or stock purposes may be taken without a licence from a groundwater or surface water including catchment dam or waterway (if there is no Crown land). This water can be used for:

- household purposes
- watering of animals kept as pets
- watering of cattle or other stock
- in the case of the 'curtilage' (fire prevention purposes) of a house and any outbuilding, watering an area not exceeding 1.2 ha with water obtained from a spring or soak or water from a dam
- irrigation of a kitchen garden.

A kitchen garden is defined as:

- that used solely in connection with a dwelling and no produce from which is sold
- in the case of a garden irrigated solely with surface water that is not part of an allotment that was alienated from the Crown before 15 December 1886, that is not bigger than 0.1ha
- in the case of a garden irrigated with both surface water and groundwater that is not part of an allotment that was alienated from the Crown before 15 December 1886, that is not bigger than 0.4 ha
- in the case of a garden irrigated solely with groundwater, that is not bigger than 0.4ha
- in the case of a garden that is part of an allotment that was alienated from the Crown before 15 December 1886, that is not bigger than 1.2 ha.



Guidelines for determining reasonable domestic and stock use

Water can only be taken without a water licence for domestic and stock use. The size of a dam needs to be proportionate to domestic and stock water needs.

Government is currently developing guidelines for 'determining reasonable domestic and stock use' which will provide advice regarding an appropriate dam size to meet domestic and stock needs. These will address all provisions described under the definition of domestic and stock use, including fire prevention.

These guidelines will be finalised in early 2010 and apply to domestic and stock water sourced from dams, groundwater or a waterway.

Promoting sustainable use of the resource

The prolonged drought conditions have highlighted that catchment dams can be inefficient, often drying up during summer, and may not meet the needs of the landholder. Alternative sources of water supply such as rainwater tanks, groundwater, reticulation supplies or waterway diversion may be more efficient ways to supply your domestic and stock needs.

Your rural water corporation can provide information about alternative sources of water.

When to obtain a section 51 (take and use) licence

Any water used or intended to be used for irrigation, commercial or intensive uses (such as dairies, feed lots, piggeries or poultry shed) requires a section 51 licence.

A section 51 licence may also be required for domestic and stock purposes when the water is taken from a waterway that does not flow over your property or when there is Crown frontage abutting the river.

When to obtain a section 67 (works) licence

Any construction, alteration, repair or decommissioning of a dam located on a waterway requires a section 67 (works) licence before work commences. A licence to build and operate a dam that is not on a waterway may also require a section 67 licence if it is a large dam, or potentially hazardous dam. A section 67 (construction) licence is required in most instances for domestic and stock bores or diversion from a waterway.

As each circumstance is different, landholders are advised to check with their rural water corporation.

Management of domestic and stock groundwater bores and waterway diversions

Domestic and stock water use from groundwater bores or waterway diversions is already registered because of the requirement to obtain a section 67 (works) licence. Through this process, the location of such water use can be recorded and the rural water corporation can ensure that its use is appropriate. The reasonable domestic and stock guidelines will assist in this process.

For more information, please contact your local rural water corporation

Goulburn-Murray Water
(03) 5833 5500
www.g-mwater.com.au

Southern Rural Water
(03) 5139 3100 or 1300 139 510
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Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
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Melbourne Water
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