

REFORMING WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT – POSITION PAPER FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why do we need reform?

A: The existing legislation simply does not provide the comprehensive suite of water management tools needed to responsibly manage the State's water resources into the 21st century with its challenges of increasing demands for water to support the growth of Western Australia and the impacts of climate change.

This reform will provide the required flexibility for water users and the government to adapt and respond to changes in climate and demand, and secure sufficient water supply to allow our state to continue to prosper into the future.

Q: What are the objectives of reform?

A: These reforms will enhance confidence in investment decisions by water users through increased security of access, improved clarity of rules and greater transparency of process; reduce the level of intervention by government in water allocation by enabling the involvement of market-based mechanisms where appropriate; and use appropriate policy and regulation to balance the needs of water users with the protection of water-dependent ecosystems.

Q: What consultation has happened?

A: Consultation on water resources management reform has been ongoing for a number of years, and recent consultation builds on the 2009 consultation. More targeted consultation has occurred with key stakeholders over the past eighteen months, culminating in the preparation of the position paper. As part of the response to previous concerns held by stakeholders, government has stated that it will not introduce cost recovery for water licences and maintain the existing licencing arrangements for farm dams.

Q: What feedback has been given?

A: At the peak body level all stakeholders support the policy positions in the paper going to consultation, recognising that their constituents may hold differing views on particular issues.

Q: What are the key features of the reform?

A: The key features are:

- The improved licensing and management framework is an enhanced version of the current licensing system. Key elements of the improvements are licences of a longer tenure and mechanisms that allow volumes of water taken under licence to be varied according to seasonal conditions.
- A water access entitlement is a perpetual or ongoing entitlement, or right, to exclusive access to a share of water from a consumptive pool, which is the amount of water that can be made available for consumptive use in a particular area.
- The main tools underpinning the framework is statutory allocation limits and statutory water allocation plans. These will be developed through a consultative mechanism, including the use of local advisory groups. Statutory allocation limits allow for the setting of allocation limits and boundaries for water resources outside a statutory water allocation plan.

Q: What are the next steps?

A: Outcomes of the public consultation will be used to finalise development of an enabling legislative framework for water resource management. The steps to be taken to achieve this will include the analysis of submissions and preparation of a response paper with consultation by a state-wide reference group. This will be followed by finalisation of the policy framework and the seeking of government approval for release of the response paper and the drafting of legislation in the 2014 calendar year.