



Frequently asked questions - Handover of Gngangara state-owned meters

This report was prepared by the former Department of Water. On 1 July 2017, the Government of Western Australia established the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, resulting from the amalgamation of the Department of Water, the Department of Environment Regulation and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority. As such, this publication contains references to previous government departments and programs. Please email drinkingwater@dwer.wa.gov.au to clarify any specific information.

Why is the government offering to hand over the state-owned meter on my property to me?

The government is handing over state-owned meters for several reasons:

- Your meter, and many others, was installed as part of the Gngangara Metering Project, which has now ended.
- Pressures on the state's water resources are intensifying. The government supports self-metering by licensees as a necessary part of a more modern approach to water resource management into the future. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's *Measuring the taking of water policy* now means that licensees need to be responsible for, and cover the costs of measuring the water they take.
- With this new policy in place, it is inequitable for the government to install and maintain meters for some licensees, yet require others to fund it themselves. It is therefore fair for the government to hand over the existing state-owned meters to licensees and prevent any ongoing inequity.

Remind me about the Gngangara Metering Project

The former Department of Water installed 1269 meters on the bores of the Gngangara Groundwater System's groundwater licences in high priority areas between 2004 and 2010. This was done as part of the Gngangara Metering Project, which aimed to gather more accurate data on groundwater use from the groundwater system. Meter readings were collected regularly, and these were analysed by the Department of

Water. Since installation, the department has maintained and repaired the meters as required.

Data from the Gngangara Metering Project provides important information to understand how much water is actually abstracted and how the groundwater system responds to the abstraction. This improves our certainty of this precious resource and how much it can continue to supply on a long-term sustainable basis.

The Gngangara Metering Project also provided benefits for individual licensees. Licensees who may have been uncertain about the need to have a meter have discovered that by accurately tracking their own water use they could improve their water use efficiency, improve their fertiliser application rates, and save money on power and fertiliser. Some licensees were able to make significant water savings and then trade the water saved to other water users.

Who has state-owned meters?

State-owned meters were installed on the bores of approximately 900 licensees, predominantly in the following sub-areas:

Adams, Beechboro, Carabooda, Carramar, Deepwater, Eglinton, Improvement Plan 8, Jandabup, Lake Gngangara, Lake Mungala, Mariginiup, Neaves, Neerabup, North Swan, Nowergup, Radar, Reserve, South Swan, Whitfords, Yalyal Brook (surface water), Yanchep.

Within these sub-areas, meters were installed on bores of licensees with licensed entitlements between 5000 kilolitres per annum (kL/a) and 500 000 kL/a.

Metering, what's in it for me?

The Gngangara Metering Project has helped to highlight the benefits to licensees of self-metering. Knowledge of your water use can help you to become more water-efficient, and importantly for you, help save you money. If you have multiple bores, you can compare pump rates and identify problems you may not have been aware of before. You can become more efficient with your fertiliser application, reducing your fertiliser costs. Reducing fertiliser use also benefits our waterways and groundwater by improving the quality of 'runoff' water that flows into them. And any water savings that you make by improving your water use efficiency may be able to be traded, which has an added financial benefit for you.

Note that any licensee who wishes to trade all or part of their licensed entitlement must meter their water use before a trade can occur.

The Gngangara Metering Project has increased our understanding of groundwater use and the long-term sustainable capacity of the Gngangara Groundwater System. The department will continue to work with licensees so that they continue to have access to good quality, affordable water supplies that are used efficiently and allocated fairly. Measuring (metering) the take of groundwater is an essential part of this.

When will the Department of Water and Environmental Protection contact me about my meter?

The handover process for Gngangara meters will begin in February 2016 and will be completed in 2018. The handover will be done in several stages that will last approximately six to eight months each. Licensees will be contacted individually when their stage is about to begin.

Do I have to accept the government's offer to hand over the meter to me?

No, you do not have to accept the state-owned meter. If you do not want to take ownership of the meter you can inform the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation of this and your meter will be removed and the associated headworks replaced.

However, if you meet the criteria for self-metering under the department's *Measuring the taking of water* policy, you will be obliged to install your own meter. The department will contact you individually regarding your state-owned meter, your options and whether you will be required to have a meter into the future.

You will then be able to make an informed decision on whether to accept the government's handover offer.

Will the meter handover cost me anything?

The government will not charge you anything to hand over the state-owned meter. If you have metering conditions on your licence, you will be required to bear any cost of reading and maintaining your meter (as per your licence conditions) from the point of handover onwards.

Will the government make sure my meter is in good condition before handing it over to me?

Yes, if you are required to have a meter under the new *Measuring the taking of water* policy, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will employ contractors to check your meter is working properly before handing it over. The contractor will inspect the meter, make sure that it is running properly and clean the meter parts if required. If the meter is faulty and cannot be repaired onsite it will be replaced. If you are not required to have a meter under the new policy, your meter will be offered to you in "as is" condition. We will contact all licensees with state-owned meters to let them know whether or not they will be required to have a meter under the new policy.

What if I don't want to sign the Transfer of Ownership Deed?

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will listen to your concerns and try to work with you to find a resolution. However, legally you will have to sign Transfer of Ownership Deed if you wish to retain the meter. If no resolution can be found, the department will come and remove your meter and replace the headworks. If you are required to have a meter under your licence conditions, you will have to install your own meter, at your own cost within a given timeframe once the state-owned meter has been removed.

Will the government continue to read or maintain my meter once it is handed over to me?

No. Once the handover is complete, you will take ownership of the meter. If you have metering conditions on your water licence, it will be your responsibility to read, report the readings and maintain the meter in accordance with those conditions. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will continue to do compliance checks and your meter may be read by the department as part of these checks.

I have heard about a new measurement policy. What is it and how does it affect me?

The former Department of Water released the new state-wide *Measuring the taking of water* policy in January 2016. This policy expands water use measurement requirements to many more licensees than the previous policy, which generally only required licensees to have meters if their annual entitlement was 500 000 kl/yr or more. For more information, you can read the measurement policy.

Under the new *Measuring the taking of water* policy you may be required to have a meter, and your water licence will need to be amended to reflect this change. You will be contacted individually by the department about how you are affected by the new policy, and when your licence will require amendment.

How will I know if I am required to have a meter under the new 'Measuring the taking of water' policy?

If you have a state-owned meter, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will contact you individually to inform you about whether you will be required to have a meter under the new policy.

Up until now, most licensees with self-metering conditions on their licence were generally those with large allocations of 500 000 kl/yr and above, or those who met other criteria such as being near ecologically significant features, or near other water users. However, with the increasing pressure on the state's water resources, the government has recognised the need to expand self-metering to the majority of licensees.

The general requirement for self-metering will be for those licences with an annual entitlement of 10 000 kl/yr or more. The department will consider exemptions on a case by case basis.

Most licensees with annual entitlements of less than 10 000 kl/yr will not be required to self-meter, unless there are special circumstances that require it. If you have a licensed entitlement less than 10 000 kl/yr, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation still encourages you to agree to the handover of your meter so you can use it for your own benefit.

Do I have a say in any changes to my licence conditions?

If you are required to meter your water take under the *Measuring the taking of water* policy, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will formally write to you proposing to amend your licence to include conditions to require metering.

You are able to make a submission to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation in relation to the proposed licence amendment and the department is legally obliged to have regard to that submission.

If you are unhappy with the department's decision you may refer the matter to the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) to review the department's decision.

However, if you have any questions about your licence conditions you are encouraged to contact the department's Swan Avon regional office on 6250 8000 to discuss your concerns.

I have a state-owned meter but I believe I am exempt from metering requirements under the new measurement policy because my licensed entitlement is less than 10 000 kl/yr? What should I do?

Even if your licensed entitlement is less than 10 000 kl/yr, you may still need to meter. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will write to you and tell you whether or not you are required to have a water meter.

If you aren't required to have a meter under the measurement policy, you have two options. If you prefer, you can take over the meter from the department in "as is" condition if you sign the Transfer of Ownership deed. We recommend this option, as having a meter can be very helpful for your own operations. Alternatively, you may decide to have your meter removed by the department and you can contact us to arrange this.

There are many benefits to having a meter, even if metering is not a condition of your water licence. Having a good knowledge of your water use can help you to become more water-efficient and more efficient with your fertiliser application, which in turn can save you money. Water savings may be able to be traded, which has an added financial benefit, and reducing your fertiliser use will help to improve the quality of water entering our groundwater resources and waterways.

If you wish to trade all or part of your licensed entitlement you must meter your water use.

What is the most convenient way to report my meter readings?

The department now offers online services to submit meter readings. Meter readings submitted via Water Online meet the department's requirements for submitting data on a 'Meter Water Use Card', which may be a condition of your licence.

Go to online.water.wa.gov.au to register for Water Online services.

When I report my meter readings to the Department of Water and Environmental Protection, how will that information be used?

One way the department will use the information is to check compliance with your licence conditions. Our primary compliance management approach will be focussed on encouraging and assisting you to achieve compliance with your licence conditions. The department may undertake enforcement action in the event that efforts to encourage and assist a licensee to comply with their licence conditions has not resulted in compliance.

Aside from licence compliance management, the department uses metering data to obtain a clear picture of water use at a local and regional scale for the purpose of water resource management. This information helps to:

- provide a better understanding of why impacts, such as declining water levels, are occurring and the reasons behind them
- assess how sensitive the water resource is to impacts from pumping
- improve data for calculating water entitlements, such as working out the average water use of particular crops

- assess how water usage changes between seasons and between years, and how it varies with climate
- provide data for computer modelling scenarios to forecast likely future demand and potential impacts
- better define the sustainable limits of the water resource
- develop benchmarks for water use efficiency.