Applying for a new Bore Construction Licence or Groundwater Licence

SOUTHERN Rural Water

FACT SHEET

Although groundwater is a renewable resource, it needs to be managed to ensure that the aquifer, existing licence holders and the environment are protected. New groundwater licence applications will only be considered if current allocations in your area allow further volumes to be issued.

This Fact Sheet provides information to landowners about applying for a Bore Construction Licence (BCL) and/or a Groundwater Licence where the water will be used for domestic and/or stock, dairying, irrigation or commercial purposes. It identifies key issues for you to consider as part of your application.

- If you are planning to construct a bore that is deeper than three meters, you must apply for a BCL. This applies to all bores, including investigation or new bores as well as the replacement or alteration of an existing bore.
- If you plan to take and use groundwater for any purpose other than domestic and/or stock use, you must also apply for a Groundwater Licence. As many of the details required by us are similar, you simply complete our BCL Application Form.
- Bore Construction Licences are valid for 12 months. If you have not completed construction within this timeframe, you can apply to renew the licence. A renewal application can only be considered if it is lodged prior to the expiry of the existing BCL, otherwise a new application (with full fees) will need to be submitted. The renewal of your BCL is not automatic and it is possible that a renewal or new licence will not be approved.
- You must not commence drilling the bore until you have received your licence.
- If your application to construct a bore is approved, you must read and understand all licence conditions. In most instances you cannot drill the bore yourself – you must contract a qualified, licensed driller to complete the work on your behalf. Drilling must be completed in accordance with licence conditions and standards noted within the book titled Minimum Construction Requirements for Water Bores in Australia Edition 2. As we also inspect some bores during construction or on completion, you need to read the conditions and if applicable, advise us when drilling has been scheduled. We require seven days' notice prior to the commencement of drilling.
- If your application to take and use groundwater is approved, your licence will detail the licensed volume you can extract annually. We will supply you with a water meter, at cost, and you can choose to have it installed by a Southern Rural Water (SRW) contractor or by a contractor of your choice. All installations must be inspected for compliance with standards and specifications. All meters remain the property of SRW. Generally, bores for domestic and/or stock purposes do not need to be metered.
- If you have an existing bore on your property and no current water licence, you can take and use water for domestic and/or stock purposes only. If you want to use the water from this bore for any other purpose, such as irrigation or dairy use, you must apply for a Groundwater Licence and complete a Groundwater Licence Application Form.
- If the proposed new bore is to be located in an area that is fully allocated and your licence application is refused, you may be able to arrange a transfer with someone in your area on a permanent or temporary basis. For more information on Water Transfers visit our website www.srw.com.au or phone us on 1300 139 510 and ask for a Water Transfer Fact Sheet.

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Key issues for you to consider

Proposed siting

While legislation sets strict guidelines on where bores can be positioned, we also recommended that you talk to your neighbours prior to drilling a bore. You will also need to consider accessibility to the proposed site and whether it is prone to flooding, what type of pump will need to be installed and if it will need power. In some instances you may be required to advertise your application to take and use groundwater.

As a general guide, the following are recommended/approximate minimum distances:

Building foundations: 3 metres

Power lines: 6 metres

Drainage pipes: 20 metres

Storage sheds or feedlots: 20 metres

Irrigation channels: 20 metres

Septic tanks or drain field systems: 40 metres

Lakes or waterways: 200 metres

A bore not in your ownership: 300 metres

You should check your licence conditions as actual distances specified on your licence may be greater than or less than those listed above.

Assessing groundwater quality

As the quality of groundwater will impact farm production and the types of crops grown, you should contact SRW, talk to drillers who work in the area and check the DSE Groundwater Database on www.dse.vic.gov.au for information about existing bores.

Once the bore has been drilled on your property, either you or your driller must submit a water sample to SGS Environmental Services for testing.. You should then continue to monitor the water quality yourself, on a regular basis, especially for salinity levels. It is recommended that bore water used for domestic and/or stock purposes should be tested regularly, say every six to twelve months, but if there is any unexplained change in water quality, it should be tested immediately.

There are three ways of testing the quality of your groundwater.

- **Physical:** This direct, sensory method includes checking water for colour, turbidity, temperature, taste and odour. At home water testing kits, available from various outlets (e.g. hardware stores, swimming pool supply stores, pet stores), will also enable you to check salinity and acidity levels.
- **Chemical:** Chemical testing by a laboratory will provide accurate information about the hardness of water, salinity and acidity levels and any unacceptable concentrations of magnesium, nitrogen or ion. This information can then be used to determine the potential impacts of corrosion and scaling on pumps, dairy equipment and plumbing or water-logging of plants (especially those under irrigation).
- **Biological:** While undisturbed groundwater is generally free of micro-organisms such as bacteria and viruses, it should be tested for contamination – especially from septic tanks. Biological quality is assessed by counting the number of ecoli organisms/volume of water.

It is also important to understand that water taken from any bore may not be fit for human consumption, directly or indirectly, without first being properly treated. SRW does not accept any liability for any lawsuits or action arising from health related injury or death from people consuming water taken from a bore.

Check the White and Yellow Pages for laboratories in your local area.

Choosing a qualified and licensed driller

All drilling contractors must hold a current Victorian Drillers Licence issued by the Victorian Drillers Licensing Board. Their level of qualification determines the type of bore they can drill. The Drilling Industry has minimum construction standards that must be complied with when constructing a bore. When the bore construction is completed, SRW regularly undertakes compliance checks with these standards.

For more information phone the Australian Drilling Industry Association on 03 9770 4000 or visit their website www.adia.com.au

Metering

If your application to extract groundwater is for any purpose other than domestic and/or stock, your use must be metered. SRW will supply a water meter at cost and you can choose to install it yourself or have it installed to SRW specifications by a contractor of your choice. SRW will inspect the completed installation for compliance to standards. All meters remain the property of SRW.

Estimating the volume of water you require

The volume of water you require will depend on a number of factors including the area to be irrigated, the proposed type of irrigation method and frequency of irrigations, the type of crops to be grown, the yield of the aquifer, the type of bore you choose and the size of the pump installed to extract the groundwater.

If the groundwater is to be used for domestic and/or stock purposes, you are likely to require a lower volume bore. If the water is for irrigation purposes, using lateral, flood or centre pivot systems, you are more likely to need a high volume bore to supply the volume of water you need, at the rate you require.

SRW does not guarantee that any specific quantity or quality of water will be available from any existing or proposed bore. We are not liable for any loss or damage suffered by you as a result of the quantity of water being insufficient or the quality of the water being unsuitable for its intended use at any particular time or for any particular purpose.

As this is quite a complex decision, we recommend you seek technical and specialist advice from the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186 or visit their website www.dpi.vic.gov.au

Key issues for you to consider

Location of property

As secure and long-term access to groundwater is highly valued, water management plans are being developed for areas with high bore density and large extraction volumes. In most instances, these areas are identified as a Water Supply Protection Area or as a Groundwater Management Area where Permissible Annual Volumes are set. Groundwater behaviour and water use is continually monitored in these areas.

If you propose to drill a bore on a property within a managed area that will be used for commercial or irrigation purposes, you should contact us to confirm that water is available or visit our website to check details about existing Water Supply Protection Areas, Permissible Annual Volumes and current allocations.

If the amount of water you propose to use is of a significant volume or purpose or there is a sensitive issue surrounding your application, you may be required to submit a hydrogeological assessment, advertise the volume in local newspapers and/or notify your neighbours. The hydrogeological assessment will identify possible levels of interference as well as other groundwater data.

Proposed type of bore

- **Investigation bores:** These are generally drilled to provide information about water quality, expected flow rates and formation details. They may also provide landowners with a well constructed casing that may be converted should a take and use licence be approved. For this reason, you should ensure your investigation bore meets legislative requirements for the siting and use before drilling commences.
- **Drilled bores:** In most parts of southern Victoria, drilled bores are the most common. The depth to groundwater will usually depend on the area and what quantities are required.
- **Spear point:** Generally found in areas where the aquifer is shallow and low yielding, these bores are linked to a common pumping point.
- **Dragline hole:** This is an excavated hole that intersects a shallow aquifer.
- **Dug well or shaft:** This is an excavated hole, often cased with large diameter concrete pipes.

For more information, contact SRW on 1300 139 510 or the Australian Drilling Industry Association on 03 9781 2229.

Proposed use

In addition to the quality and yield of the aquifer, the decisions you make about how you propose to use the groundwater, the volume you require and flow rate needed for your chosen activity will influence the type of bore to be drilled. These key variables will also help to determine the depth of the bore.

- If you are a landowner and you are planning to use the water for **domestic and stock purposes only,** it is likely that you will need a low-yielding bore. Generally, these provide a daily volume of between 0.01 to 0.22 megalitres per day. This would provide enough water for you to meet your domestic needs and water your vegetable/home garden.
- If you are planning to use the water for **dairying, irrigation or commercial purposes,** you may need a higher yielding bore. To help us assess your application quickly, you need to provide additional information about the area to be irrigated, the type of crops you are planning to grow, the proposed extraction rate and daily volume required. Your application is then assessed against current Permissible Annual Volumes for the aquifer in your area.
- Should SRW issue any licence, it is not to be interpreted as an endorsement of the design and/or construction of existing works. We do not accept any responsibility or liability for any lawsuit or action arising from injury, loss, damage or death to person or property which may arise from the maintenance, existence or use of the works.
- If you apply to take and use water in an area where there is intensive use of groundwater, an area where sensitive issues are developing due to drought or seasonal conditions or if your application is to use a significant volume of groundwater, you may be required to submit a Hydrogeological Assessment and/or to advertise the details of your application in local newspapers and notify your neighbours.

For more information about the use of groundwater as part of your farm plan, contact the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186 or visit their website www.dpi.vic.gov.au.

See overleaf for more contact information.

Who to contact for more information

If you are planning to tap into groundwater, you should obtain as much information as possible before drilling as this will save you time and money.

- Contact Southern Rural Water on 1300 139 510 for information about:
  - Groundwater Management Areas and Water Supply Protection Areas
  - Applying for licences, both construction and extraction
  - Fees and costs.
- Contact the Department of Primary Industry for best practice irrigation advice and the development of whole farm plans. Their Groundwater Notes Information Series is available from their website www.dse.vic.gov.au
- Contact a groundwater consultant to determine the likelihood of finding groundwater at the site as well as information about groundwater availability, yield, quality, depth to the aquifer and recommended drilling and construction methods. These specialists are listed in the White and Yellow Pages under Engineers or Hydrogeologists.
- Contact the Australian Drilling Industry Association on 03 9770 4000 or visit their website www.adia.com.au for a listing of Victorian, qualified, licensed drillers.
- Contact a pump supplier for information about selecting and installing a pump. These specialists are listed in the White and Yellow Pages.
- Contact SGS Environmental Services on 03 5172 1555 for details on how to analyse the water quality in your bore. For a list of laboratories in your local area, check the White or Yellow Pages listings.
- Contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Customer Service Centre on 136 186 for more information regarding water availability.

More information

For more information about applying for a Bore Construction Licence or a Groundwater Licence, contact our Licensing staff at Southern Rural Water on 1300 139 510.

Updated November 2006