

Non-urban water measurement policy overview

A policy stating how the Queensland Government is strengthening the way non-urban water take is measured, metered, and reported across the state is now available. Legislative amendments to support implementation of the policy are being considered by government.

The policy makes it clear who needs a meter and to what standard.

The following information provides an overview of the key policy elements.

Policy objectives

- increase the coverage and standard of metering of direct measurement of non-urban water take
- improve the measurement of overland flow water take
- provide for better access to timely and accurate water take data
- ensure fit for purpose compliance and enforcement for measurement of water take

Risk-based approach

The approach for applying and implementing the policy is risk-based and considers water resource pressure to ensure implementation is prioritised in catchments where the resource is assessed at the highest risk.

This means that new measurement requirements will be implemented first in areas where the resource is at the highest risk. For example, where water resources are fully, or near fully allocated, such as in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin.

Focus on volumetric entitlements

The policy will apply to all surface water and underground water entitlements that state a specified limit on the volume of water that can be taken (known as volumetric entitlements). This includes surface water entitlements to take overland flow.

This will ensure water entitlements that have specified volumes will be accurately measured, giving the department better data to support compliance activities, and to inform water allocation and planning decisions.

Water entitlements which are already required by regulation to have a meter, will continue to require a meter under the policy.

Thresholds and exemptions

The application of thresholds and exemptions will ensure that low-risk take and activities are not subject to unnecessary metering.

A state-wide minimum threshold will apply – with entitlements of 5ML or less not required to have a meter, unless otherwise stated in a water plan.

Entitlements to take water for the following low-risk activities and uses will be exempt from requiring a meter:

- stock and domestic
- public amenities
- educational facilities.

As is the case under the existing policy approach, inactive volumetric entitlements will not need to be metered.

Meter reading and telemetry

Meter reads will continue to be required. As the department develops digital systems and platforms, it is expected that meter reads will become easier to submit via online apps and the frequency of meter reads will increase.

The department is exploring the use of telemetry to improve the coverage, timeliness and accuracy of receiving water take data.

The intention is for telemetry to be required on existing and new or replacement meters in areas where water pressure risk is highest and where entitlements are subject to time and flow-based requirements to take water. This means that metered unsupplemented surface water entitlement holders in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin will be the priority for telemetry installation.

Meter standards

The Queensland standard for non-urban water meters will continue to apply.

The policy states that all new and replacement meters are to be pattern approved. Noting the practical challenges with non-urban water metering in Queensland, implementation of this requirement will be staged and is reflected in the standard. Currently, the use of pattern approved meters is required on pipes up to and including 600mm in diameter. Water entitlement holders will be informed of any future decisions to change these requirements.

New and replacement meters will continue to require inspection and a validation certificate issued before water can be taken under the entitlement.

Transitional arrangements for existing meters

The Queensland standard for non-urban water meters enables existing meters to remain in service, provided the meter is fit-for-purpose for the installation, is installed correctly, and is working accurately.

The standard sets clear expectations around maintenance for each meter type and provides a list of existing meters that can remain in service, subject to specified requirements.

For large installations (>600mm) where a new meter is required, modular metering systems can still be used.

Meter standards for supplemented meters

To ensure water take across the state is measured in a consistent way, the Queensland non-urban water meter standard will also apply to water supply schemes.

The policy therefore applies to the take of supplemented water. Meters used in a water supply or distribution scheme will be expected to meet [Queensland's interim meter standard for non-urban metering](#).

We will work directly with water service providers to determine how they will achieve this and ensure customers are consulted.

Measuring the take of overland flow water at the farm scale

To ensure there is way to measure the volume of overland flow water take, overland flow entitlement holders will be required to prepare a measurement plan.

The measurement plan will detail the measurement devices and calculations (the measurement system) used on-farm to determine the volume of overland flow water taken under an entitlement.

The measurement plan will need to be certified by a registered professional engineer and will need to be re-certified every five years. All measurement devices used will also need validation certificates. This will demonstrate that the measurement system is compliant, much like a meter validation certificate demonstrates that a water meter is compliant.

Implementation timeframes

New metering and telemetry in high-risk areas will be prioritised for implementation. The scheduling of new metering is detailed in a publicly available implementation plan to ensure water users have visibility and certainty of the timeframes they will need to comply with. The implementation plan will be updated periodically.

Revalidation timeframes for existing meters in metered entitlement areas can be found in Schedule 11 of the Water Regulation 2016.

More information

- Go to <https://www.rdmw.qld.gov.au/water/consultations-initiatives/rural-water-futures/strengthened-water-measurement> to access the Non-urban water measurement policy and implementation plan.
- Go to <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/mining-energy-water/water/metering> to find out more about water metering
- Go to <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/policy/policy/nwi/nonurban-water-metering-framework> to find a list of pattern approved meters.