

Rural water management program

Proposals for strengthening non-urban water measurement

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

Version 2, July 2020
(minor administrative updates)



In 2019 the Queensland Government sought feedback from industry and the community on proposals for strengthening non-urban water measurement.

The consultation ran from 9 September to 13 December 2019. We received over 300 submissions and comprehensive feedback from industry bodies and water entitlement holders.

Many of the people we spoke to expressed concerns about the impacts of the drought and their ability to meet any new metering requirements. In December 2019, the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy confirmed that farmers will not be further burdened with additional costs while they are dealing with the devastating effects of drought.

All stakeholder feedback has been considered and is helping us to shape a future policy.



Map of stakeholder meeting locations.

Consultation stats

320 +
submissions received

21,000
letters sent to water entitlement holders

22
stakeholder meetings across the state

400+

Thank you to everyone who participated in the stakeholder meetings, and to those who lodged a submission in response to the policy proposals.

We also acknowledge the support of the Queensland Farmers' Federation during consultation.



More than 80 people attended the stakeholder meeting at Dalby.

What we heard

In the written submissions and at the stakeholder meetings, we heard:

- strong support for better accountability for using water
- broad acceptance that water measurement is key to fairer and more accountable water use
- appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback, although some were disappointed with the consultation timing and process.

Industry stakeholders, water entitlement holders and community members also raised concerns about some of the proposals. The main issues raised were:

- **Timeframes for implementation**

Feedback throughout the consultation highlighted that financial stress through the drought will impact many water users' ability to meet the proposed new metering requirements.

Industry readiness to support the policy and the availability of qualified people to install, maintain and validate meters in a timely manner is of concern. The availability of pattern approved meters was also raised as an issue for implementation.

- **Costs associated with the proposed metering requirements**

Feedback indicates concern about additional costs for meter installation, maintenance, telemetry and accuracy testing. It was also noted that pattern approved meters are more costly. The focus on the proposed high level (+/-5%) of meter accuracy was questioned. It was suggested that having an operational meter, perhaps with reduced accuracy, would achieve better water management outcomes.

- **Application and scope of telemetry**

The benefits and viability of telemetry were questioned. While a blanket approach to implementing telemetry across the state was not supported, there was some support for a risk-based approach. Concerns about privacy and who will have access to the information collected were raised.

- **Transitional arrangements for existing meters**

Keeping existing functional meters in operation for as long as possible is a priority for many water users. It was argued that due to the drought many meters have been idle for substantial periods and therefore have not experienced the wear and tear of normal use. It was suggested that 'end of life' for meters should therefore be determined on the volume of flow through the meter, rather than how old they are. Clear guidelines for transitional arrangements are needed.

- **Who will need a meter**

Uncertainty about how the policy would impact individual circumstances was evident. Given the significant variation in entitlements, meter ownership arrangements and scale of operation across the state, the consultation paper did not offer sufficient information for this.

- **History of metering policy, implementation and support**

Inconsistency over time about metering policy and requirements, departmental support and compliance was a theme that emerged through the consultation. Water entitlement holders require better engagement, support and information to understand and meet their obligations.

A commitment has been made by Minister Lynham that no new metering costs will be introduced in drought-declared areas during the drought. All issues raised through the consultation are being considered as we develop the measurement policy positions.

Ongoing metering activities

Metering activities that will continue as usual, including in drought-declared areas and may result in cost to water entitlement holders, include:

- provision of meter reads within metered entitlement areas
- replacement of meters due to faults or to become approved under a validation or revalidation process. Replacement meters must meet the current metering standard (you can find the standard by searching 'interim water meter standard' on www.qld.gov.au)
- installation of a meter due to an existing water entitlement condition or requirement within a Water Management Protocol or as required under a limitation notice under the *Water Act 2000*.
- installation of a meter required under an existing meter notification process.

More information

- Contact your local business centre (select 'direct numbers and locations' and then 'water management' on www.dnrme.qld.gov.au)
- For information on the Rural Water Management Program search 'rural water management program' on www.dnrme.qld.gov.au
- For information on water metering, search 'water metering' on www.qld.gov.au
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