

Notice to install a watertight delivery system

Assessment under section 35 of the Great Artesian Basin and other regional aquifers water plan

The Water Plan (Great Artesian Basin and other regional aquifers) 2017 (water plan) provides strategies for maintaining and improving aquifer pressure. The water plan mandates that certain licences are required to install a watertight delivery system on associated works by 2 September 2027. This means that uncontrolled (free flowing) bores used to take water under these licences must be capped and drains must be decommissioned and replaced with a piped distribution system.

Works programs have been ongoing for decades and significant investment has been made to achieve the objective of making the Basin watertight. Almost 770 bores have been rehabilitated and 440 bores piped. Around 15,000 kilometres of open drains have been decommissioned over the years. This has saved more than 226,000 megalitres of water with investment of over \$239 million from the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

Despite this success there are still outstanding projects within Queensland that require works to be rehabilitated or replaced.

To determine if the deadline of 2 September 2027 is still a reasonable timeframe to deliver these outstanding projects, the water plan allows the chief executive to assess:

- whether a program of financial assistance to install watertight delivery systems for water bores is available to licensees
- whether climatic or economic conditions since the commencement are likely to have affected the ability of licensees to install watertight delivery systems for bores
- other matters the chief executive considers relevant.

This assessment has been completed and found that:

- drought and natural disasters over the past decade have economically constrained many landholders from being able to undertake the works.
- the current Improving Great Artesian Basin Drought Resilience (IGABDR) program is fully subscribed and only funded until June 2024.
- there will be outstanding projects after June 2024.
- there are likely to be ongoing impediments including a scarcity of class three drillers, weather conditions limiting site access, and increasing costs for services and materials required to complete the works on time.

Based on these findings, **the chief executive has decided to change the date by which a watertight delivery system must be installed for those licences containing relevant conditions. The new installation date is 2 September 2032.**

The Department of Regional Development Manufacturing and Water will send letters to affected licence holders providing detail about this change of date and what it means. This change of date will ensure landholders have more time to undertake the works required and will remain compliant with the water plan in 2027. For further information, please visit www.business.qld.gov.au and search for 'Great Artesian Basin rehabilitation program'.