

## What is a water use approval?

A water use approval allows you to use water on your land.

Examples of water uses that require approval are irrigation, town water supply, power generation and mining.

For more information about water use approvals, go to [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water) > Licensing & trade > Approvals > Water supply work and water use approvals.

You do not need a water use approval if an exemption applies.

## What are the exemptions?

The Water Management (General) Regulation 2018 specifies a number of water use approval exemptions.

A summary of these exemptions is provided below. You should refer to the Regulation for a full description of these exemptions, including the circumstances when the exemption applies, and any restrictions or limitations.

## How can I access a copy of the Regulation?

NSW legislation is published online.

To access a copy of the Regulation, go to [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water) > What we do > Legislation & policies > Acts & regulations, and then click on the link to the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018.

## Need help?

### Rural landholders and industries

WaterNSW is your one-stop shop for licensing services, including approvals.

- Call 1300 662 007 during business hours
- Email [Customer.Helpdesk@watersw.com.au](mailto:Customer.Helpdesk@watersw.com.au)

### Department of Industry customers

Contact the NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator for advice.

- Call 1800 633 362 during business hours
- Email [nrar.enquiries@nrar.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nrar.enquiries@nrar.nsw.gov.au)

## Summary of exemptions

### Exemptions for landholders

*Landholder* means the owner or lawful occupier of a parcel of land, as defined in the *Water Management Act 2000*.

**Table 1: Exemptions for landholders**

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Collection of water from roofs in rainwater tanks by landholder</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the landholder of the property where a rainwater tank is located.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water that is collected from a roof by a rainwater tank.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 12 of Schedule 4</p> <p>Clause 5 of Schedule 1</p>
<p><b>Landholders with dams for specific purposes</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the landholder of the property where the water supply work is located.</p> <p>The water must be taken by a dam located on a minor stream as defined in the Regulation.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for one of the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• control or prevention of soil erosion</li> <li>• flood detention and mitigation</li> <li>• capture, containment and recirculation of drainage and/or effluent to prevent the contamination of a water source</li> <li>• specific environmental management purposes approved in writing.</li> </ul>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 12 of Schedule 4</p> <p>Clause 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Schedule 1</p>
<p><b>Landholders with dams or excavations located on a river or lake</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the landholder of the property where the water supply work is located.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by a dam or excavation, which is</li> <li>• located on a river or lake, and was</li> <li>• constructed under section 7 of the <i>Water Act 1912</i> before 1 January 2001.</li> </ul> <p>The water taken must only be used for domestic consumption and/or stock watering, or for purposes that do not require the extraction of water.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 12 of Schedule 4</p> <p>Clause 7 of Schedule 1</p>

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Landholders with works that impound water</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the landholder of the property where the water supply work is located.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water by a work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impounds water, and</li> <li>• was constructed before 1 January 1999, and</li> <li>• is located: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ on a minor stream as defined in the Regulation, or</li> <li>○ within the Western Division in an area of land shown in the legend of a 1:100 000 topographic map issued by the Land Information Centre applying at 1 January 1999 as land subject to flooding or inundation, or lakes shown as 'perennial' or 'intermittent'.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The water taken must only be used on the property where the work is located for domestic consumption and stock watering, or not result in the extraction of water.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 12 of Schedule 4</p> <p>Clause 6 and 9 of Schedule 1</p>
<p><b>Landholders with works in lakes that are mainly dry</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the landholder of the property where the water supply work is located.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water by a work located within the Western Division in an area of land shown in the legend of a 1:100 000 topographic map issued by the Land Information Centre applying at 1 January 1999 as 'Lake Mainly Dry'.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 12 of Schedule 4</p> <p>Clause 8 of schedule 1</p>
<p><b>Domestic electricity generation by landholder</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the landholder of a property.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water to generate electricity for domestic consumption on the landholder's property.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water is returned to the same water source from which it was taken, and within 50 metres of the point at which it was taken, and</li> <li>• returned water is of the same quality as it was when it was taken in terms of chemical composition, temperature, sediment content and salinity.</li> </ul>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 8 of Schedule 4</p>

## Exemptions for public authorities

*Public authority* is defined in the *Water Management Act 2000*. Public authorities include public service agencies and local councils in NSW.

**Table 2: Exemptions for public authorities**

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Road construction and maintenance by road authorities</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to road authorities within the meaning of the <i>Roads Act 1993</i>.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for road construction and road maintenance.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 2 of Schedule 4</p>

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Construction and maintenance of rail infrastructure by transport authorities</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to <i>transport authorities</i> as defined in the Regulation.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for the construction or maintenance of rail infrastructure facilities within the meaning of the <i>Transport Administration Act 1988</i>.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transport authority has considered the environmental impact of the activity in accordance with section 5.5 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>, and is</li> <li>satisfied that activity is not likely to significantly affect the environment.</li> </ul>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 3 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Dust suppression by public authorities</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to public authorities lawfully engaged in dust suppression activities.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for dust suppression.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 5 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Operation of hydro-electric power station</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person who is lawfully engaged in the operation of a hydro-electric power station in connection with a water supply work owned by WaterNSW or the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for the purpose of generating hydro-electric power.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>water is returned to the same water source it was taken, and</li> <li>returned water is of the same quality as it was when taken.</li> </ul>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 11 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Basic human water needs</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation, but only if the Minister for Regional Water is satisfied that the watering is urgently required for basic human water needs, and is in the public interest</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water in accordance with an approved watering program that specifies the amount of water proposed to be taken and the water source from which the water will be taken.</p> <p>This exemption ceases to apply four months after the date on which the watering program was approved, or a later date which the minister has approved in writing.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 14 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Environmental work construction</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to a public authority.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for the purpose of constructing a water supply work on waterfront land, and the work must have an environmental benefit.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if the work is in accordance with a program approved by the Minister for Regional Water in writing that specifies the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>amount of water proposed to be taken, and</li> <li>water source from which the water will be taken.</li> </ul> <p>The maximum volume of water which may be taken under this exemption is 0.5 megalitres in any water year (1 July—30 June), or any lesser amount specified by the minister.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 15 of Schedule 4</p>

### General exemptions

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Use of water for purpose authorised by development consent</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for any purpose authorised by a development consent under the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development consent is in force, and</li> <li>use of water is not for the purpose of power generation by a major utility.</li> </ul>	<p>Clause 35(a)</p>
<p><b>Domestic consumption and stock watering</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for domestic consumption or stock watering.</p> <p><i>Domestic consumption and stock watering</i> are defined in the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i>.</p>	<p>Clause 35(b)</p>
<p><b>Water carting for drought relief for domestic consumption and stock watering</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person who is lawfully engaged in the carriage of water for drought relief.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for drought relief, but only if the water is used for the purpose of domestic consumption, stock watering or both.</p> <p><i>Domestic consumption and stock watering</i> are defined in the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i>.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 4 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Aboriginal cultural purposes</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person who is the holder of a specific purpose access licence for Aboriginal cultural purposes.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for any purpose for which water may be taken under the licence.</p>	<p>Clause 35(c)</p>
<p><b>Approved environmental purposes</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for an environmental purpose.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if the use of water is in accordance with a plan approved under section 8E(7) of the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i>.</p> <p>This plan is for the implementation of an adaptive environmental water condition applied to a water access licence.</p>	<p>Clause 35(d)</p>
<p><b>Hydrostatic testing of gas pipelines</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person who is lawfully engaged in the hydrostatic testing of a gas pipeline.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for initial testing of a gas pipeline before it is put into service for the first time.</p> <p>The maximum volume of water that may be taken under this exemption is seven megalitres.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 6 of Schedule 4</p>

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Prospecting or fossicking for minerals or petroleum</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person who is lawfully engaged in prospecting or fossicking for minerals or petroleum under the <i>Mining Act 1992</i> or the <i>Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991</i>.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for prospecting or fossicking.</p> <p>The maximum volume of water that may be taken under this exemption is three megalitres in any water year (1 July—30 June).</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 7 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Water bore testing</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person who is lawfully engaged in testing a water bore by using a pump test.</p> <p>The pump test must be required under, and carried out in accordance with, one of the following authorisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water supply work approval, or</li> <li>• conditions of an approved project under Part 3A or an approval under Division 5.2 of Part 5 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>.</li> </ul> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for the purpose of testing the water bore, but only during the week following completion of the water bore's installation, or any other period for which testing is required to be carried out by the relevant approval.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 9 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Exempt monitoring bores</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person.</p> <p>The taking of water must be from an <i>exempt monitoring bore</i> as defined in the regulation.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for measuring water levels, water pressure or water quality.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 10 of Schedule 4</p>
<p><b>Emergency safety measures</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the use of water for the purpose of complying with a direction given in an emergency under the <i>State Emergency Service Act 1989</i> or the <i>State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989</i>.</p>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 17 of Schedule 4</p>

Water use approval exemption	Regulation reference
<p><b>Establishment of sugar cane plantings</b></p> <p>This exemption applies to any person.</p> <p>This exemption applies to the taking of water to establish agricultural plantings of sugar cane. A sugar cane plant is established once it reaches a height of 50 centimetres.</p> <p>This exemption only applies if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the water is taken from an artificial channel, and</li> <li>the channel was constructed for the primary purpose of draining water from land on which sugar cane is grown, and</li> <li>the channel does not have banks that are above ground level, and</li> <li>the channel is located in an area to which the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Clarence River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016</i>, the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Brunswick Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016</i>, the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Tweed River Area Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2010</i> or the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Richmond River Area Unregulated, Regulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2010</i> applies, and</li> <li>any water supply work used to take the water is not fixed to the land, and</li> <li>the volume of water taken does not exceed 0.05 megalitres per hectare of land on which sugar cane is being established in any continuous 12 month period.</li> </ul>	<p>Clause 34(1)</p> <p>Clause 13 of Schedule 4</p>

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