

Amendments to the Snowy Water Licence

Background

About the Snowy Water Licence

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme is one of the most complex integrated water and hydroelectric power schemes in the world. It is operated and maintained by Snowy Hydro Limited, a company owned by the Australian Government.

The Snowy Water Licence (the licence) defines Snowy Hydro Limited's rights and obligations in relation to water in the Snowy Mountains Scheme. It is a NSW water licence issued and administered by the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation, which is a statutory body established under the *Water Management Act 2000* to represent the Crown and carry out various water management functions.

About the review

Under the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997*, the licence is subject to mandatory reviews, initially after five years and then at intervals of 10 years. The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment administers the licence on behalf of the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation and managed the 10-year review (the review). The review was completed in 2018.

The review identified administrative amendments to the licence and proposed further investigating options to better manage environmental flows and improve current water release rules. Actions arising from the review will also improve licence oversight and coordination of environmental water management in the Snowy Mountains.

Proposed amendments

The review highlighted 10 initial administrative amendments to the licence to improve transparency, remove redundant licence provisions and fix errors (Table 1). More details of each of the amendments can be found in the [Ten-year review of the Snowy water licence—Final report](#).¹

Additional review actions

The review scoped the more complex issues raised in the submissions and developed plans to resolve them. The NSW Government will explore better ways to deliver environmental flows and optimise water use, review the effectiveness of amendments made to the licence in 2011 and remove licence ambiguities.

The department's performance as the licence administrator was also reviewed by an independent expert panel. More details regarding this review can be found in the panel's [Final report](#).¹ In response to the review, the department will improve licence administration, strategic decision-making and the effectiveness of the Snowy Montane River Increased Flows program.

Once these actions have been completed, more licence amendments are likely to be required. We plan to make these in 2021. There will be more public consultation at this time.

¹ www.industry.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/209109/ten-year-review-of-the-snowy-water-licence-final-report.pdf

More information and submissions

To view the proposed amendments to the licence and make a submission, visit the [Snowy Water Licence page of our website](#).²

If you would like more information or updates, please email snowylicence.review@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Submissions are due by 5.00 pm on 16 June 2020.

Table 1. Proposed administrative amendments

Action	Summary
1A	The licence will be varied so that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowy Hydro Limited is obliged to prepare a public version of the Annual water operating plan (AWOP), summarising the forthcoming year's operations, but not disclosing information that may disadvantage it on a commercial basis • future Water Consultation Liaison Committee (WCLC) agreements will be published in both the commercial and public versions of the AWOP.
2	The licence will be varied to remove Schedule 5 and reference the publicly available information of rights to water that exist across the Snowy Mountains Scheme.
4	Clause 8.3(2) of the licence will be varied so that Snowy Hydro Limited may consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antecedent conditions, when providing details on a quarterly basis of the likely range of forecast water releases • guaranteed releases. A new provision will also be added to the licence that obliges Snowy Hydro Limited to provide WCLC, upon request from a member, updated projections of quarterly forecast releases in a timely manner if experiencing a wet sequence.
5	The licence will be varied to remove all provisions related to the outlet construction works at Jindabyne and Tantangara dams.
6	The licence will be varied to remove all reference to the operation of the Mowamba Borrowings Account.
9	Clauses 12.2 and 25.2 of Schedule 3 of the licence will be varied to clarify that Snowy Hydro Limited may use the following data to demonstrate compliance with daily, monthly and annual flow targets from Jindabyne and Tantangara dams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational data to report compliance against daily targets • hydrographically corrected data to report compliance with monthly and annual targets.
10	The licence will be varied to capture the agreement for Snowy Hydro Limited to continue making a riparian release of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 1.4 megalitres per day (0.5 gigalitres per year) from the Mowamba Weir, as part of nine gigalitres per year Snowy River base passing flow requirement. • Up to 2.4 megalitres per day from Eucumbene Dam, to maintain a visible flow in the Eucumbene River at Nimmo.
14A	A. The licence will be varied to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct the drafting errors in the Snowy–Tumut calculation • reflect the WCLC drafting of Clause 10.1, Schedule 4 and definition of 'discretionary above-target water release'.

² www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/basins-catchments/snowy-river/corporate-licence

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Fact sheet

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15A	The licence will be varied to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• correct the drafting error in the definition of the ‘agreed annual release’• reflect the WCLC drafting of the definition of ‘recovery amount’.
17	Clauses 2.1 and 3.1, Schedule 4 of the licence will be varied to ensure the method used to calculate the water available to each development reflects any inter-valley water transfers.

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