



Department of  
Environment, Parks and Water Security

# REPORT CARD

Compliance and Enforcement  
Priorities 2022–2023  
Water Resources Division

## ABOUT COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The Controller of Water Resources (Controller) is responsible for the regulation of water extraction in the Northern Territory. Water Resources supports the Controller in administering these duties, including ensuring compliance with the *Water Act 1992* and *Water Regulations 1992*. Some activities include checking compliance with water extraction licences, permits to interfere with a waterway, bore work permits and driller licensing.

This report card is a snapshot of the activities and outcomes achieved in 2022-2023.

### COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES 2021-2026

Broad issues fundamental to management of water resources under the Act. The priorities give us consistent direction for the medium term (5 years).

### COMPLIANCE PLAN (ANNUAL)

Specific activities, targets and performance outcomes to help us increase compliance and progress the priorities over 12 months.

### COMPLIANCE REPORT CARD (ANNUAL)

A snapshot of the progress against the priorities and plan over 12 months.



## PRIORITY 1 MEASURING AND REPORTING WATER USE

### ✓ MONTHLY REMINDERS FOR REPORTING WATER USE ARE SENT TO LICENCE HOLDERS

Monthly email reminders were sent each month, with around 7000 emails sent in total, last year. Reminder emails help licence holders submit water use through the online MyMeter form, which received 5080 meter readings this year.

### ✓ QUARTERLY AUDIT OF WATER USE RECORDS

Water extraction audits were undertaken in the quarters ending June, September, December and March. The audits focussed on addressing long term non-compliance with water use reporting conditions by taking regulatory action where no meter readings had been provided in 3 consecutive months.

Compliance with licence conditions requiring licence holders to report water use increased in each audit period, from 77% in June to 94% in March 2023 and this continues to be a focus for compliance.

### ✓ PROACTIVE SITE INSPECTIONS

121 site inspections were undertaken in 2022-23, representing 20% of water extraction licences. Officers prioritised sites based on the Compliance Plan, and better data tools were developed to help identify and target high priority inspections. These new tools enable us to spatially map high priority sites and visualise where licence holders meet multiple high priority criteria.

92% of licence holders had a meter fitted and registered for an extraction point by the end of 2022-23. Development of better data systems has allowed us to identify that 46% of licence holders have one or more extraction points not fitted with a meter, meaning they are not fully compliant. Our systems will help us target unmetered extraction points more easily next year.

Water Resources  
Division supports the  
controller, we are his  
boots on the ground.





## PRIORITY 2 REGISTERING BORES AND STATEMENT OF BORES

### ☒ REVIEW STATEMENT OF BORES AND REGISTER BORES

Statements of bore provide critical information about aquifers in the NT. Water Resources registered 644 statements of bores between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023.

Next year a focus will be on verifying that construction of bores complies with the [National Minimum Construction Requirements\\*](#), and compliance with the restrictions placed on some driller licences.

### ☒ ANNUAL AUDIT OF BORE WORK PERMITS

Bore work permits help set site specific requirements for bore construction, above national minimum standards. Permits help protect aquifers and water users from pollution and other risks.

A desktop bore work permit audit was undertaken which found 99% of bore work is undertaken by the class of licensed driller required under the permit. The rate of bore registration is difficult to quantify using our current database, however 245 statement of bores were submitted under permits. This is about the number of permits granted per year, indicating we have a good match between bore construction and permitting.



## PRIORITY 3 INTERFERING WITH A WATERWAY

### ☐ ESTABLISH GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR WORK THAT INTERFERES WITH A WATERWAY

In January 2023 the draft Interference With a Waterway Guideline was published for public consultation. The guideline is still being updated to incorporate feedback, but when finalised it will provide clarity on what constitutes a material interference with a waterway.

Finalising the guideline remains a priority next year.

### ☐ REACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Enquiries were undertaken relating to 4 potential illegal interferences with a waterway. This year, enquiries were commenced within 6 days of notification of the incident in every case.

Establishing if offences have occurred is often complex, sometimes requiring specialist technical advice. Our one month target time frame to complete an assessment and determine a regulatory response is not always achievable. Learning from the 2022-2023 investigations will help resolve interferences exempt from permit requirements faster.

\* <https://adia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Minimum-Construction-Requirements-Edition-4.pdf>





#### **PRIORITY 4 UNLAWFUL WATER EXTRACTION**

##### **☑ REACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS**

Enquiries were made into 27 licences suspected of exceeding their licence entitlements. 18 enquiries were resolved on the day the exceedance was identified, usually because extraction was found to be associated with lawful stock or domestic use.

3 warning letters were sent where over extraction was verified, all warnings were issued within 35 days of the end of the water accounting year.

121 site inspections were undertaken in 2022–23, representing 20% of water extraction licences. Water Resources has improved its data systems to identify licence holders approaching or exceeding extraction limits. Our tools can now identify when a licence holder is approaching extraction limits, and spatially map these licence holders. This will allow us to better target inspections for these licence holders in the future.



#### **PRIORITY 5 RECOVERY OF UNUSED LICENSED WATER ENTITLEMENTS**

##### **☑ PROACTIVE SITE INSPECTIONS**

Where water users consistently fail to use their licence entitlements for beneficial use, water can be recovered for allocation to other users through the Recovery of Unused Water policy.

Recoveries put on hold during Covid-19 were finalised, resulting in water being recovered from three licence holders. Together 14,850 ML was returned to the consumptive pool across two water allocation plan areas.

As part of the 121 inspections undertaken in the year, three inspections were undertaken to verify water use and discuss recovery of unused water. The inspections focussed on Tindall Limestone Aquifer water users.