

Managing water in and around Ti Tree



**FREQUENTLY
ASKED QUESTIONS**

Managing water in and around Ti Tree

A water plan for the Ti Tree region

A water allocation plan (plan) has been developed for the Ti Tree region. The plan was declared in February 2020 for a period of 10 years.

Where is the Ti Tree plan area?

The Ti Tree area is located approximately 200 km north of Alice Springs. It covers approximately 14,000 km². The water plan has been divided into 3 water management zones to reflect the different water [resource characteristics of each area](#)¹.

The 3 zones are:

- Northern
- Southern
- Low Yield

The most productive aquifer is found in the Southern zone and is crucial for the region's public water supply and horticulture.

How is water shared under the plan?

Water is shared between the environment and water users. The plan determined that 14% of the water resource can be taken sustainably over 100 years. This does not include any rainfall that may occur during this time.

The plan allows 10,200 ML (0.14% of the water resource) to be extracted per year by water users across the Ti Tree region. This leaves over 6,140,000 ML in the environment.

Extracted water is shared between uses including:

- 537 ML for rural stock and domestic use
- 290 ML for public water supply
- 1,505 ML for the Aboriginal water reserve²
- 7,808 ML for economic development.

Is there water available for a new licence?

Water in the Southern zone is only available through [water trading](#)³.

Water is not available for additional licensing in the Northern zone.

Water is available for licensing in the Low Yield zone.

The plan does not permit surface water extraction licences. Surface water can be used for rural stock and domestic purposes without a licence.



Managing water in and around Ti Tree

What was the outcome of the mid-term review?

There have been multiple plans for Ti Tree, the first being declared in 2002. The current plan was declared in February 2020 for 10 years.

The current plan provides certainty by declaring the plan for its maximum possible term. The current plan is informed by the best available science for the region.

The mid-term review, completed in November 2024, found the plan for Ti Tree is suitable to remain in force for the next 5 years. The plan is largely delivering against its objectives. From the review, 3 priority actions to improve future management decisions were decided:

1. Improve the understanding, and protection, of water related Aboriginal cultural values of the resource
2. Improve the understanding of the groundwater recharge and basin geology
3. Undertake a one off water quality audit across the plan area to confirm baseline conditions and detect change over time.

What is an Aboriginal water reserve?

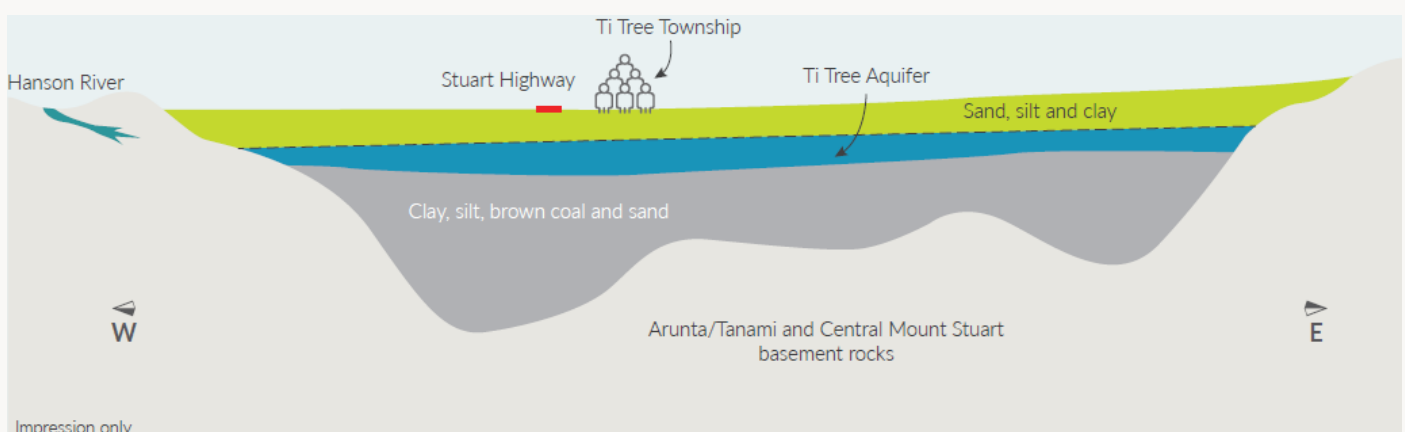
An [Aboriginal water reserve](#)⁴ is a specific portion of water set aside for local Aboriginal people to use for economic development. The Aboriginal water reserve is only accessible to eligible Aboriginal people to use themselves, or trade.

The Aboriginal Water Reserve is notional and will be available when water is surrendered or recovered from existing licences.

How are Aboriginal interests considered in the plan?

Ongoing participation of Aboriginal people is a key focus to ensure the plan is adequately protecting and preserving Aboriginal interests in the plan area.

An Aboriginal Reference Group was established in 2024 to provide guidance for the Ti Tree plan mid-term review. Since then, the group has been a key partner in the [Aboriginal water science project](#)⁵ funded through the National Water Grid and Northern Territory Government.



Managing water in and around Ti Tree



How does the plan protect trees that depend on groundwater?

The plan includes specific guidelines for the Ti Tree catchment to minimise the impact of water extraction on trees. The guidelines protect 70% of groundwater dependent ecosystems and licence applicants must demonstrate that their proposed extraction will not exceed these limits.

Groundwater extraction will have some impact on trees in the area, but the plan is about finding the balance between maintaining biodiversity and enabling development, to provide economic opportunity for people who live and work in the region.

Is there science to support the plan?

The Northern Territory Government has an extensive understanding of the Ti Tree aquifer system, particularly in areas of high demand along the Stuart Highway. Water Resources gathers data from 50 monitoring sites, including 48 bores and 2 surface water sites, in the plan area. This data has informed a water model that has been developed for the area.

The water model has helped scientists to understand what might happen to the water resource under different water extraction scenarios.

Other inputs into the water plan included:

- historic climate and rainfall analysis
- geological and hydrogeological studies
- water, land, soil and biodiversity assessments.

A scientific review was undertaken to support the plan's 5 year review in 2024. It found that the scientific basis for the plan is still appropriate. Read more in the [Technical Summary](#).

Find out more

You can read more about the Ti Tree water plan including the water plan, the background report and the implementation actions via <https://nt.gov.au/environment/water/management-security/water-control-districts/ti-tree/ti-tree-water-allocation-plan-multi>.

Information on other topics talked about in these FAQs include:

- 1 Setting management boundaries - nt.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1456561/water-resource-management-statement-setting-managment-boundaries.pdf.
- 2 The AWR identified in this plan is not currently available as existing licensed entitlements in the southern Zone have insufficient unallocated water to deliver the AWR.
- 3 Trading water - nt.gov.au/environment/water/licensing/water-extraction-licence/water-trading
- 4 Aboriginal water reserves - nt.gov.au/environment/water/management-security/water-allocation/aboriginal-water-reserves
- 5 Aboriginal Water Science - Arid zone: Ti Tree Basin palaeovalley - <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/projects/aboriginal-water-science-ti-tree-basin>