

Recovery of unused water licence entitlements

In the NT only a small portion of water in waterways or aquifers can be taken for economic use.

The majority remains in the system to support the environment and culture.

Water given through an extraction licence that is not used, could be used by others.

When there are many licences with unused water, a water resource may appear to be fully allocated, which can prevent new licence applications from being granted.

There is a policy, where water that isn't consistently used, it is recovered.

The recovery of unused licensed entitlements ensures water can be fully utilised for the benefit of the Territory.

In over allocated areas, the recovered water is returned to environment to help balance the resource toward sustainable management.

In other areas, the recovered water becomes available for use by others.

How water recovery works

Step 1.	The Department compares the volume of water on a licence (licensed water entitlements) to the actual reported water use. When actual water use is substantially below the licensed water entitlement, for three consecutive years or more, water may be recovered from that licence.
Step 2.	The Department will provide notice to the licence holder, that their licence is being considered for recovery. The Department will give them an opportunity to respond.
Step 3.	The licence holder can respond to the Department to demonstrate a genuine requirement for the water and provide supporting information.
Step 4.	The Controller of Water Resources will consider all relevant information and make a decision regarding the unused licensed entitlement. The Controller will write to the licence holder advising on the decision made. Licence holders have a right to seek a review of the decision.

For more information, please contact us at water.regulation@nt.gov.au or phone 08 8999 4455.