

Water bores in the NT – roles and responsibilities

Bore work refers to: drilling, decommissioning, constructing, altering, deepening, plugging, backfilling or sealing off a bore. It also includes removing, replacing, altering, slotting or repairing the casing, lining or screening of a bore.

Bore work is a regulated activity in the Northern Territory. Regulating bore work helps to protect aquifers and provides valuable information to improve understanding of some of the Northern Territories most important water resources.

Property owners, licensed drillers, drilling companies and the regulator all hold responsibilities to make sure bore work is compliant with legislation and national standards.

Property Owners	<p>Property owners need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a bore work permit before bore work is undertaken. • Ensure the driller holds the appropriate licence for the work, and that the driller complies with the conditions of the bore work permit. • Provide a copy of the permit to the licensed driller who will undertake or supervise the work. • Notify Water Resources of the expected work start date and the name of the licensed driller undertaking the work.
Licensed Drillers	<p>All water bore drilling in the NT needs to be done by a licensed driller. A list of current licensed drillers can be viewed here.</p> <p>Drillers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with the conditions of their drilling licence. They must only undertake bore work of the appropriate class, endorsement and restrictions for their licence. • View bore work permits for the work, and ensure the bore is drilled and constructed in accordance with permit conditions. • E-mail Water Resources a 'statement of bore' no later than 28 days after completing the work.
Employers	<p>Many drillers undertake bore work as part of their employment. Companies that employ drillers have responsibilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure their employees are appropriately licensed to perform the work or supervised by a fully licensed driller at all times. • Undertake due diligence to ensure employees are aware of their legal obligations through appropriate business systems and practices.
The Regulator	<p>The Department is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulating water bore work in the Northern Territory. • Assessing applications for bore work permits and drilling licences, recommending conditions and restrictions for permits and licences. • Monitoring compliance with licence and permit conditions, and taking action when non-compliance is identified.

Approvals for water bores in the NT

Bore Work Permits

Permits are generally issued to the property owner, as the person responsible for the bore over the long term. A bore work permit is valid for a set period, up to 2 years.

Bore work permits put restrictions or conditions on the construction of bores, taking into account the location and proposed purpose of the bore. This can include requirements to obtain a driller of the specified class and to ensure the bores are located specified distances from sources of pollution, such as septic tanks.

Bore Work Permits are required if:

- The proposed bore is more than 3 metres deep and the land where the proposed bore is located is within a water control district, which can be viewed in [NR Maps](#).
- The proposed bore is for the purpose of petroleum activity or mining activity, anywhere in the Northern Territory.

A bore work permit is not required for cleaning out a bore (eg. air lifting).

Drilling Licence

Drilling licences are granted to people that have demonstrated practical experience and technical skills in water bore drilling. Driller licences put general conditions on the driller to do work in accordance with national standards, and to report to the regulator about their work.

A drilling licence has 3 parts: class, endorsements and restrictions. If a driller does not hold a licence with the appropriate class, endorsement and restrictions for the proposed work, they are not authorised to undertake the work and to do so would be a breach of their licence conditions and the Water Act 1992.

Class

The class of drilling licence relates to the technical skill level required to construct bores. There are three classes: Class 1, Class 2 and Class 3. Class 1 applies to the simplest construction, and Class 3 applies to the most complex.

Endorsements

Endorsements relate to the methods of drilling a driller is licensed to use. Each method requires different skills and experience. Drillers may hold endorsements for auger, cable tool, non-drilling rig, rotary air, rotary mud and/or sonic.

Restrictions

Restrictions may be imposed on drilling licences. Restrictions may relate to the purpose of the bore (e.g. restricted to monitoring bores only), the depth they can drill to, or other factors.



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