

Barossa Prescribed Water Resources Area

Unbundled water rights

The process to issue partially unbundled water licences is the responsibility of the Department for Environment and Water and is being led by the Water Licensing Branch. It is a separate process that is dependent on the adoption of the amended *Barossa Water Allocation Plan*.

Please note: Information provided in this fact sheet about proposed policies in the amended plan are indicative only and subject to change pending consideration of the amended plan by the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water.

Partially unbundled water rights - what does this mean?

Currently water rights and responsibilities across the *Barossa Prescribed Water Resources Area (PWRA)* are outlined on a single water licence. Unbundling separates these rights and responsibilities and clearly describes and specifies them on separate authorisations, resulting in benefits such as quicker and more efficient transfer of water rights, and transparency in dealing with seasonal or long-term variations in water availability and water resource conditions.

As part of the review of the *Water Allocation Plan* for the *Barossa PWRA 2009*, a feasibility and benefit assessment were completed to determine the extent to which the single water licence would be unbundled. The amended *Water Allocation Plan* for the *Barossa PWRA* proposes that the single water licence be partially unbundled and separated into the following water management authorisations:

- **Water access entitlement** - provides an ongoing right to a specified share of water available for allocation from a prescribed water resource and are issued on a **water licence**.
- **Water allocation** - the right to take a specific volume of water for a given period of time, not exceeding 12 months, based on the volume of water available for allocation in that period.

These two authorisations can be sold or transferred to another person.

The amended *Water Allocation Plan* proposes conditions for the take of water from a specific water resource be attached to the water licence and/or water allocation.

What are the benefits

The benefits of partial unbundling include:

- A clear distinction between an ongoing right to access water (**water access entitlement**) and the actual volume available for use (**water allocation**) in a given water year.
- **Clarification of water rights** for banks and financial institutions that may provide mortgages against those rights.
- Provides a **flexible approach to management** that can address both rapid changes in surface water and more gradual changes in groundwater availability.
- The change to partially unbundled water rights aims to support an access framework that **facilitates the equitable and sustainable use** of the prescribed water resources.

Water licence

- Not required for stock, domestic or First Nations cultural purposes
- Is personal property and relates to consumptive pool
- Lists the wells, dams and watercourse pumps through which water can be taken
- Provides a Water Access Entitlement (WAE)

Water access entitlement

- Issued under the water licence
- Mortgageable component
- Subject to water licence conditions (such as the consumptive pool and where water can be taken from)
- Comprised of a number of entitlement shares (e.g. 100 shares)

Value of entitlement shares

- Determined by the volume of water to be allocated from each consumptive pool
- Allocated water from each consumptive pool is determined by the Minister from time to time by notice in the Gazette

Water allocation

- Issued under a water access entitlement and based on the value of entitlement shares
- Lasts for 12 months (except for carryover approved via the plan)
- Subject to the conditions on the water licence (such as the consumptive pool and where water can be taken from)

Unbundled water rights Fact Sheet

Barossa water licence holders

With the implementation of the new amended water allocation plan comes the need for updated water licences that align with the principles of the new plan.

Below is a summary timeline of that separate but aligned process, that is coordinated by the DEW Water Licensing Team.

Proposed timeline for issuing partially unbundled water licences to align with an amended water allocation plan

January to June 2026
Reviewing current licensing database

Alignment to new consumptive pools and water sources

If the Water Allocation Plan is approved by the Minister

Water licences and allocations will be prepared to be issued in line with the approved WAP

Annually

Water allocations will be updated based on the volume available for each consumptive pool and will apply for the water use year from 1 July

August to September 2026

Updated licences and new water accounts will be sent

Note: This timeline for issuing of water licenses and allocations is indicative only and is subject to the approval date of the water allocation plan.

DEW Water Licensing will provide further information when your updated licence and new water account is issued.

More information

DEW Water Licensing Branch

✉ dew.waterlicensingprojects@sa.gov.au

☎ 08 8372 7561
Option 3

Northern and Yorke Landscape Board

🌐 www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny

☎ 08 8841 3444

📘 @NYLandscapeSA

📺 @LandscapeSA-NY

📷 @LandscapeSA.NY

Unbundled water rights Fact Sheet

Next steps for Greenock and Salt Water Creek surface water existing users

These are the next steps in the process to establish surface water licences for existing users, as referenced in the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* and in accordance with the Department's established practice.

1. Develop a methodology for determining how much surface water each existing user receives, with consideration for methods outlined in the 2009 WAP. Under the LSA Act, the existing user is entitled to obtain a water entitlement to meet the future requirements of the user – (a) based on their reasonable requirements during the establishment period; or (b) for water for a future development in which they were legally committed or had committed significant financial or other resources during the establishment period. During the development of this process, affected water users are engaged and their views considered.
2. Communicate with the water user what their proposed water entitlement will be, providing an opportunity for the water user to communicate any other relevant information and if appropriate, resolve any final concerns.

3. Issue final surface water entitlement, noting there is an opportunity to appeal to the Environment, Resources and Development Court in the six weeks following.
4. The Department is required to consider whether the aggregate of existing user entitlements exceeds the capacity of the resource. It is not known at this stage if management is required, but it will be consistent with the policies of the amended Barossa WAP. The Department will ensure that affected parties are informed of the status of this component of the process in its communications approach.

If you are currently using surface water and would like to establish if there is an associated water licence application; or log the surface water use activity as not being captured in the original existing user process, please contact dew.waterlicensingprojects@sa.gov.au.

Water users should be aware, however, that the process for issuing new licences for Greenock and Salt Water creek surface water users may take several years (e.g. 1-3 years).

Timeline for the establishment of surface water licences for existing users in the Greenock and Salt Water Creek area of the Barossa PWRA

2026-2027
Establish current water use & land ownership

- Confirm current landowner details
- Development of entitlement methodology

2027-2028
Consultation and issue of licences

- Consult with existing users regarding proposed water licences
- Consideration of feedback
- Issue final water licences

Note: Indicative timeline only and subject to outcomes of consultation with water users.

More information

DEW Water Licensing Branch

✉ dew.waterlicensingprojects@sa.gov.au

☎ 08 8372 7561
Option 3

Northern and Yorke Landscape Board

🌐 www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny

📘 @NYLandscapeSA

📺 @LandscapeSA-NY

📷 @LandscapeSA.NY

☎ 08 8841 3444