Fact sheet

Decommission a water bore

Information for approval holders and licensed drillers

Failed or unwanted bores must be decommissioned to restore the environment as close as possible to the original state. Decommissioning work must be done by a licensed driller as outlined in the Minimum Construction Requirements. This protects precious groundwater resources from contamination, deterioration, and uncontrolled flow.

Why decommission a water bore, test bore or well?

Water bores, test bores or wells must be decommissioned when:

- no longer required or suitable for landholder's needs
- casing has deteriorated
- all test holes must be sealed on completion of testing
- there is uncontrolled flow.

Failed bores constitute a potential hazard to health and safety. They also pose a risk to the preservation of the groundwater resource. All decommissioned bores and test holes must be permanently sealed to protect groundwater and guard against accident or injury to people or animals.

How do I decommission my water bore?

To decommission a water bore, you need to review the conditions on the original approval issued by WaterNSW. To do so, please visit the NSW Water Register to search for your approval. Conditions on your approval may require specific actions before your bore can be registered as decommissioned. If the bore has not been constructed, you can surrender your approval without decommissioning. However, if construction has commenced, decommissioning is required to protect the water source.

Requirements that may be in your conditions include:

1. You may be required to notify WaterNSW of your intention to decommission your bore 60 days before undertaking the work – and you may need to receive approval from WaterNSW to proceed. You can do this by lodging an Intent to decommission a water bore.

2. You may be required to submit a work plan to decommission. Talk with your licensed driller on the most appropriate method for your site.

3. If your bore is 'flowing' (pumping is not required to obtain water) or in a sensitive water source, your application and workplan must be approved by a hydrogeologist from Department of Planning & Environment – Water (**See back page**).

4. If your conditions require notification or approval to be issued from WaterNSW, you must wait until approval is received. Then engage a licensed driller (Class 5 or above for flowing bores & sensitive groundwater sources as noted in the approval).

5. On completion, your licensed driller needs to submit a Bore Construction Report (BCR) covering the steps taken to decommission the work. It is imperative that the work, once decommissioned, cannot be used to take water. This would result in a breach of the *Water Management Act 2000*.

Can my application to decommission be refused?

Upon reviewing your application, WaterNSW may advise that the bore cannot be decommissioned, or that it needs to be decommissioned in accordance with other requirements. These requirements will be specified in writing within 60 days from receiving the notice of intention.

Which driller class is required to decommission my bore?

If the bore to be decommissioned falls into any of the following categories it requires a Class 5 driller's licence or above:

- The Great Artesian Basin Water Sharing Plan
- Murray-Darling Basin Porous Water Sharing Plan
- Fractured Rock Murrumbidgee Alluvial Groundwater Sources Water Sharing Plan
- the bore is a 'flowing bore' i.e. no pumping required.

Under the *Water Management Act 2000* drillers must observe the "minimal harm" rule to the environment. To access more information on licence classes for drillers in NSW, visit our Drillers Licences webpage.

Need further information?

For more information on decommissioning a bore please visit the WaterNSW website or refer to the Minimum Construction Requirements of Water Bores in Australia.

Sensitive water sources

Sensitive water source	Water sharing plan
Central Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Groundwater Sources
Eastern Recharge Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources
Great Artesian Basin Central Shallow (MDB) Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Basin Shallow Groundwater Sources
Great Artesian Basin Surat Shallow Groundwater Sources	NSW Great Artesian Basin Shallow Groundwater Sources
Great Artesian Basin Warrego Shallow Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Basin Shallow Groundwater Sources
Southern Recharge Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources
Surat Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources
Warrego Groundwater Source	NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources
Gunnedah-Oxley Basin MDB Groundwater Source	NSW Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources
Lower Murrumbidgee Deep Groundwater Source	Murrumbidgee Alluvial Groundwater Sources
Lower Murray Groundwater Source	NSW Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources
Lower Murray Groundwater Source	NSW Murray-Darling Basin Fractured Rock Groundwater Sources