

# About groundwater management and licensing

## What is groundwater?

Groundwater is water found beneath the earth's surface in pores and crevices of sand and rocks. Sand and rocks from which groundwater can be pumped are known as aquifers.

Groundwater supports a significant amount of agricultural activity, commercial operations, provides urban supplies, and is an essential source of water for domestic and stock supply.

It's also an important environmental asset that provides base flow to streams and supports wetlands and other groundwater dependent ecosystems.

## Groundwater licences

- A Works (Operate) licence contains rules that relate to how a bore can be operated, such as how much water can be taken in a day.
- A Take and Use licence (often referred to as a groundwater licence) sets the volume that a person can take from a bore in a year and other associated conditions.
- If you don't already have a bore, you will need a Bore Construction Licence to drill for groundwater even if you're only going to use it for domestic and stock purposes or groundwater monitoring. This licence must be issued before any bore drilling or construction commences.

## Groundwater areas

**WSPA:** Water Supply Protection Area. An area that requires intensive management and monitoring due to risks associated with groundwater extraction.

**GMA:** Groundwater Management Area. An area that groundwater has been intensively developed or has the potential to be developed further.

**Unincorporated area:** Currently no WSPA or GMA defined due to low levels of groundwater use; these areas will gradually be defined within GMAs.

## How is groundwater managed?

GMW plays an essential role in the sustainable management of groundwater for local communities and the environment in northern Victoria. The Minister for Water is responsible for the management of groundwater across Victoria.

In our part of northern Victoria, GMW issues and administers groundwater licences and develops and implements management plans on behalf of the Minister.

Groundwater Management Units (GMUs) are defined areas where groundwater extraction is managed according to specific rules. GMUs vary in size and are determined based on aquifer size, density of use and water corporation boundaries.

The two types of GMU are:

- Groundwater Management Areas: Areas where there is already significant groundwater use or potential for further use. GMAs are determined by GMW and managed using local management plans.
- Water Supply Protection Areas: Areas that require intensive management due to risks to the resource from groundwater extraction. WSPAs are declared by the Minister and are managed using statutory groundwater management plans.