

Water access licence exemption – coastal construction of buildings and infrastructure

Groundwater can be taken during construction of buildings and infrastructure in coastal areas without a water access licence

Exemption from needing a water access licence

Under the Coastal construction of infrastructure exemption, groundwater can be taken during the construction of buildings (including residences), infrastructure, roads, fences and other permanent structures, provided:

- the construction activity holds all required approvals
- where a water supply work approval is required:
 - it includes a condition that limits the volume of water taken
 - all conditions of the approval, including the water take limit, are fully complied with, and
 - the volume of water taken is recorded and reported to the Minister within 28 days of the end of the water year.

Claiming the exemption

The exemption automatically applies to qualifying projects – no application is required – if all conditions are met and complied with, including recording and reporting water take. The exemption:

- applies only to the water sources covered by the water sharing plans listed in this fact sheet (generally located east of the Great Dividing Range)
- applies only to groundwater taken for construction purposes from those listed water sources
- does not apply to water taken after construction is complete, for example, to keep a basement dry. A water access licence is still required for ongoing use, unless another exemption applies
- expires on 30 June 2029.

The exemption is designed to support faster delivery of housing and infrastructure in coastal NSW while long-term infrastructure dewatering reforms are under consideration.

All other approval requirements remain in place. Failure to comply may void the exemption, and unauthorised activity may result in enforcement under the *Water Management Act 2000*.

Recording requirements

You must keep detailed records of any groundwater taken under this exemption. Records must include:

- the total volume of water taken each year for each project or activity
- the date(s) the water was taken
- the water source used
- the authority under which the water was taken (for example water supply work approval, licence under the *Water Act 1912*, development consent, complying development or an approval exemption under legislation)
- the name or details of the person taking water
- a brief description of the construction activity
- the location of the water take.

Water sharing plans covered by the exemption

- Bega River Area Regulated, Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2024
- Bellinger River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2020
- Brunswick Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022
- Clarence River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- Clyde River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- Coffs Harbour Area Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022
- Deua River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- Greater Metropolitan Region Groundwater Sources 2023
- Hastings Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2019
- Hunter Regulated River Water Source 2016
- Hunter Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022
- Lower North Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022
- Macleay Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- Nambucca Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016

- North Coast Coastal Sands Groundwater Sources 2016
- North Coast Fractured and Porous Rock Groundwater Sources 2016
- Paterson Regulated River Water Source 2019
- Richmond River Area Unregulated, Regulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2023
- Snowy Genoa Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- South Coast Groundwater Sources 2016
- Towamba River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2023
- Tuross River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016
- Tweed River Area Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2023

More information

Visit the [WaterNSW website](#) for more information on licensing requirements or book an appointment to discuss your water licensing enquiries. You can call the WaterNSW Customer Service Centre on 1300 662 077 during business hours or email Customer.Helpdesk@waternsw.com.au.