Metering rule amendments in the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018

The NSW Government has introduced critical changes to the Non-urban metering framework to accelerate compliance.

The amendments to the non-urban metering rules in the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018 aim to significantly enhance water resource management in NSW while making it quicker, easier and cheaper for many water users to comply.

Background

The non-urban metering framework was introduced in 2018 with the goal of ensuring the majority of all licensed water take in NSW is measured with accurate, auditable and tamper-evident meters. A comprehensive review of the non-urban metering framework was conducted from 2023 to 2024 in response to implementation delays. This review aimed to identify compliance barriers and propose solutions to accelerate the metering reforms.

Key objectives

Key recommendations from this review have been incorporated into the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018. They form part of a broader suite of actions aimed at ensuring 95% of licensed water entitlement in NSW is accurately metered by December 2026.

The amendments include reducing the number of low-risk and smaller water works required to install meters, allowing resources to be directed toward larger volume and high-risk water works where compliance will have the greatest impact.

To ensure compliance efforts are focused on high priority areas, some metering compliance deadlines have been extended. Specifically, high-risk works, defined as surface water pumps with a diameter ≥500 mm, and inland NSW water users with works nominated by total licence entitlement of 100 ML or more, must comply with metering requirements immediately.

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New metering requirements and due dates

Works	Measurement requirements	Compliance date
All surface water pumps ≥ 500 mm in diameter	• AS4747 compliant meter • Duly qualified person (DQP) validation • Local intelligence device (LID) and telemetry	Must already be compliant.
All works nominated by total entitlement ≥ 100 ML, unless otherwise exempt[1]	• AS4747 compliant meter • DQP validation • LID and telemetry	Inland water users must already be compliant. Coastal water users must comply by 1 December 2026[2]
All works nominated by total entitlements of >15 ML and <100 ML, unless otherwise exempt[1]	• Pattern-approved meter • Mandatory take reporting • *DQP validation and LID/telemetry optional*	Must comply by 1 December 2027 or by renewal of work approval, whichever is later
Pumps and bores below the size-based thresholds **Works nominated by total entitlement ≤15 ML (unless a surface water pump ≥500 mm in diameter)**	• No meter mandated, but required if trading water allocations • Mandatory take reporting	Not applicable
Works not taking licensed water (unintended, inactive) **Works not nominated by licensed water entitlements**	• No meter mandated	Not applicable

(See clause 232A, Schedule 9 and Schedule 8, clauses 2 and 4 to 7 in the regulation)

[1] Groundwater bores less than 200 mm in diameter are exempt along with surface water pumps less than 100 mm in diameter

[2] Work approval holders with a pre-existing condition of MW2452-00001 should already an AS4747 meter installed.

Expansion of duly qualified persons workforce

A significant barrier to the metering rollout has been the shortage of duly qualified persons (DQPs) to install AS4747 compliant metering equipment.

The definition of DQPs has now been expanded to include individuals with relevant skills and competencies, such as plumbers, electricians or similar trades. These tradespeople are now able to qualify as DQPs after completing a shorter induction program which will increase the available workforce and expedite metering installation.

(See Schedule 8A in the regulation)

Extension of AS4747 meter revalidation requirements

To help manage the demand on DQPs and prioritise the installation of new AS4747 compliant meters, revalidation requirements have been extended. The revised revalidation requirements include:

- after the initial installation, revalidation will take place 10 years later
- following this initial 10-year period, revalidation will occur every 5 years thereafter.

(See Schedule 8 in the regulation)

Faulty metering and telemetry provisions clarified

The provisions for handling faulty metering and telemetry equipment have been clarified to ease the burden on approval holders and improve compliance outcomes. The changes include:

- notification requirements: approval holders must notify WaterNSW (via a Section 91i form) if telemetry connection is lost for 72 hours or more (this also applies to floodplain harvesting). This clarifies the requirement for approval holders to notify WaterNSW when metering equipment (which includes telemetry equipment) is not functioning or operating properly.
- repair or replacement: approval holders are now allowed to repair or replace faulty metering equipment. Previously, the regulation only allowed for repair.

These provide a clearer framework for managing equipment issues, striking a balance between practical solutions and compliance requirements.

(See Division 4 of Part 10 in the regulation)

Works size changes and notification requirements

A new notification requirement has been introduced to ensure the department has accurate records of existing works and their corresponding metering requirements to enhance oversight and compliance. This means:

- approval holders must notify the department within 90 days if they demolish a work that is smaller than what is authorised on their work approval and then construct a different sized work

Approval holders are already permitted to construct works only up to the size specified on their approval.

(See clause 248A in the regulation)

Recording and reporting requirements

All water users are required to record and report their water take, regardless of metering requirements to ensure effective water resource management. The only exception applies to approvals that are not nominated by a licence.

(See clause 244, 244A and 250 in the regulation)

Classification system for water supply works

A new classification system is being introduced to ensure all water supply works are accurately identified in government data systems for better compliance and reporting. Approval holders will be required to classify their water supply works into the following categories:

- constructed
- not constructed
- decommissioned
- taking water for basic landholder rights only
- not taking water from a water source
- declared by the landholder to be not taking water.

Only works classified as 'constructed' will require compliant metering, except if an exemption applies. This classification system, which is still in development, will also apply to floodplain harvesting works.

(See clause 31, clause 232A and clause 238CA in the regulation)

At-risk water sources

Groundwater sources previously listed in Schedule 9 of the regulation (sometimes called 'at-risk water sources') have been removed until more accurate information is available to assess whether there are any risks to these water sources that need to be addressed.

Importantly, approval holders with small water supply works previously listed in the 53 groundwater sources in Schedule 9, must continue to record and report their water take but are no longer

required to install a meter. Water users who have already installed a meter can continue using it to fulfil their recording and reporting obligations.

The regulation now requires groundwater users – including those previously listed in Schedule 9 water sources – to install an AS4747 meter with a LID and telemetry if their bore is 200mm or more in diameter and their entitlement is 100 ML or more.

Once improved data on metered and non-metered extraction has been obtained, the department will consider whether it needs to develop criteria for identifying at-risk water sources. If adopted, these criteria would determine which water sources are deemed at-risk and require all water supply works to be metered, with no exemptions.