# Report card for the Bell River Water Source

Report card 2 of 30

## Water source context

**Water Sharing Plan:** Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025

**Area:** 1,519 km$^2$

**Inflowing water source**: Molong Creek Water Source

**Receiving water source**: Macquarie Cudgegong Regulated River Water Source

### River flows

**Flow records**: 1939 to present at Bell River at Neurea (421018)

**Stream type**: Perennial

### Basic landholder rights

**Domestic and stock rights estimate**: 513 ML/year

**Native title rights estimate**: Nil at commencement of plan

### Licensed water entitlements

**Total surface water entitlement**: 8,133 ML/year (127 licences)

**Local water utilities entitlement:** 795 ML/year (3 licences)

**Unregulated River:** 7,138 ML/year (83 licences)

**Domestic and Stock:** 200 ML/year (41 licences)

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Table 1. Access rules

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|---|---|---|
| **Cease to take** | Take is not permitted when there is no visible flow at the pump site. | No change |
| **Take from in-river pools** | Take is not permitted when the in-river pool is less than full capacity. | No change |
| **Take from in-river dam pools** | Take is not permitted unless it is consistent with the water supply work approval. | No change |
| **Take from off-river pools** | Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is less than full capacity. | No change |
| **Exemptions** | Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source, including for:<br>• health and hygiene<br>• domestic use,<br>• take from a run-off harvesting dam<br>• specific licences listed in Schedule 4 of the plan.<br>The exemption for stock watering ceased to apply after year 5 of the 2012 plan. | No change, however specific licences with exemptions are now listed in Schedule 2 of the plan. |

Table 2. Rules for constructing surface water supply works

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|---|---|---|
| **In-river dams** | Not permitted in third or higher order streams in this water source.<br>Exemption for applications for town water supply purposes only. | No change |
| **Protection for wetlands** | N/A | No new or amended works permitted within or 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.<br>No new or amended works permitted within wetlands indicated on the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map of the draft plan unless there will be no more than minimal harm to the wetland concerned. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | This rule does not apply to replacement works. |

Table 3. Water trading (dealing) rules

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|---|---|---|
| **INTO water source** | Trades are permitted in from the Molong Creek water source only if the new work is located downstream of the confluence of Molong Creek and Bell River. | No change |
| **WITHIN water source** | Trades are not permitted from downstream of the confluence of Molong Creek and Bell River to upstream of the confluence of Molong Creek and Bell River. Other trades permitted within water source, subject to assessment. | No change |
| **Protection for wetlands** | N/A | Not permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.<br>Not permitted into WSP prescribed wetlands identified in the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map.<br>Trade between licences within the same WSP prescribed wetland is permitted. |

Trading covers:

- assignment of rights dealings (trading of a licence)
- share component dealings between water sources (trading of entitlement between water sources)
- water allocation dealings (trading an annual allocation)
- water supply works dealings (relocation of an extraction point).

# Key factors for decisions

- The risk assessment indicated the water source has low instream values and identified a medium risk from extraction to zero and low flow periods. Based on this information current access rules were considered appropriate.

## Improving protection of wetlands

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) have recommended the draft plan provide better protection for important wetlands. The department have developed criteria to identify specific wetlands in the plan area. It is proposed to include rules to improve their protection by prohibiting new water supply works and restricting trades into or upstream of these areas. The prohibition of new works will not apply to replacement works.

- Wetlands identified for improved protection were drawn from multiple datasets including the Long-Term Water Plan, Floodplain Management Plan, Ramsar listing, Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia and Endangered Ecological Communities.
- A map of the WSP prescribed wetlands identified for this plan is available on the department's website.
- More information on improving protection of wetlands is available in a fact sheet.

# Other key rules – no change proposed

## Managing access licences

Each water access licence has its own share component (volume of the licence) and a water allocation account that acts like a bank account where water is credited or debited.

- Water is credited to an account by an available water determination or if water is traded in (purchased) during the year from other licence holders.
- Water is debited from the account when water is extracted from a water source or traded out (sold). Total extraction from a work (pump, bore, etc.) will be measured through metering or logbooks.

## Carryover and individual account limits

For domestic and stock and unregulated river access licence accounts, carryover of water remaining in an account is permitted up to 1 ML per unit share or 100 % of share component (where expressed in ML) at the end of each water year.

For domestic and stock and unregulated river access licences, the maximum water account debit in any 3 consecutive water years is:

- the volume of water allocated to the account over those 3 years from available water determinations, plus
- any adjustments made for allocation assignments (trades) or water allocation re-credited into the account.

## Rules for granting access licences

There are limited purposes for which a new licence will be granted. We anticipate that users who need more water will source it from the market. One reason a licence may be granted is for Aboriginal cultural purposes. Aboriginal Cultural Access Licences are permitted to be granted up to a maximum volume of 10 ML/year per licence, subject to assessment.

Other reasons are identified in Section 10 of the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018.

# Public exhibition

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

**In particular, we seek your feedback on:**

- **proposed rules to protect WSP prescribed wetlands.**

A submission form is available on the department's website.

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's Public Exhibition website.