

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

When the *Water Resources Act 1998* came into full effect in December 1999, for the first time it provided the tools for the Territory to effectively and sustainably manage its water resources and protect the health of waterways while ensuring that the use of water resources contributed to the community's physical, economic and social well-being. The Act was an important element of the Government's efforts to meet its targets for COAG water reforms and secure Competition Payments from the Commonwealth.

The Act provides for the preparation of Environmental Flow Guidelines which set out the methodology used to identify flows necessary to protect all ACT waterbodies. While the guidelines have been developed on the basis of the best available scientific advice a number of pragmatic assumptions were necessary. In order that better information will be available when the guidelines are reviewed, and in light of the ACT Government's partnership in the Centre, the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology is undertaking a major study into environmental flows in the Cotter River. The study should assist in the appropriate provision of environmental flows with the minimum impact on urban water supplies. As required by its licence to take water ActewAGL is undertaking a substantial monitoring program to provide input to the study.

The Act also requires the preparation of a Water Resources Management Plan which, on a catchment basis, describes the water resources of the Territory, quantifies environmental flows on the basis of the Environmental Flow Guidelines, identifies water available for use, and allocations which can be made over the next 10 years. Water catchments boundaries used for this purpose are set out in Figure 16. Both the guidelines and the plan are disallowable instruments and they came into effect in December 1999 and February 2000 respectively.

The Act is administered by the Environment Protection Authority. Its major provisions relate to:

- granting of allocations which are entitlements to use a certain amount of water;
- licensing of all water taken from groundwater and the licensing of surface water except for most water taken for stock and domestic purposes;

- granting of bore construction permits and water control structure permits;
- granting of drillers' licences; and
- the ability to impose a range of fees and charges.

A notable feature of the Act is that it separates water allocations from land ownership. An allocation refers to an entitlement to use a particular volume of water sourced from a particular catchment and is potentially tradeable. A licence only provides a right to use a particular allocation at a specific site and is transferable only as long as the allocation is also transferred.

Appropriate environmental flows are maintained through water allocations and licensing. Water allocations are only issued in accordance with the Water Resources Management Plan and thus ensure that the total quantity of water that could be used from ACT water resources is sustainable. Licence conditions are used to ensure that water allocations are only taken from ACT water resources when and where the water is available (in accordance with the Environmental Flow Guidelines). Through these measures the Territory's water resources are now protected from overuse and misuse.

To provide for effective management of water resources the Environment Protection Authority has determined that all licensed water use is to be measured. Thus all licences include a standard condition requiring the installation of a water meter (or some other approved measuring system). This is not always a straightforward matter due to the location and nature of existing infrastructure, difficulties in the supply of equipment, and personal circumstances of individual licensees. While the majority of licensees have now installed meters some follow up is still required particularly in on-going maintenance of meters.

While the regulatory measures outlined offer significant protection to ACT water resources, in the longer term improving water use efficiency will be the most effective tool in protecting water dependent ecosystems. To this end the Government used the ability to levy fees and charges provided by the Act to adopt a water abstraction charge of 10 cents per kilolitre on all licensed use (except for some groundwater use where it is not legally possible). In addition to promoting efficient use, this charge also provides a return to the community on the use of one of its most valuable resources.

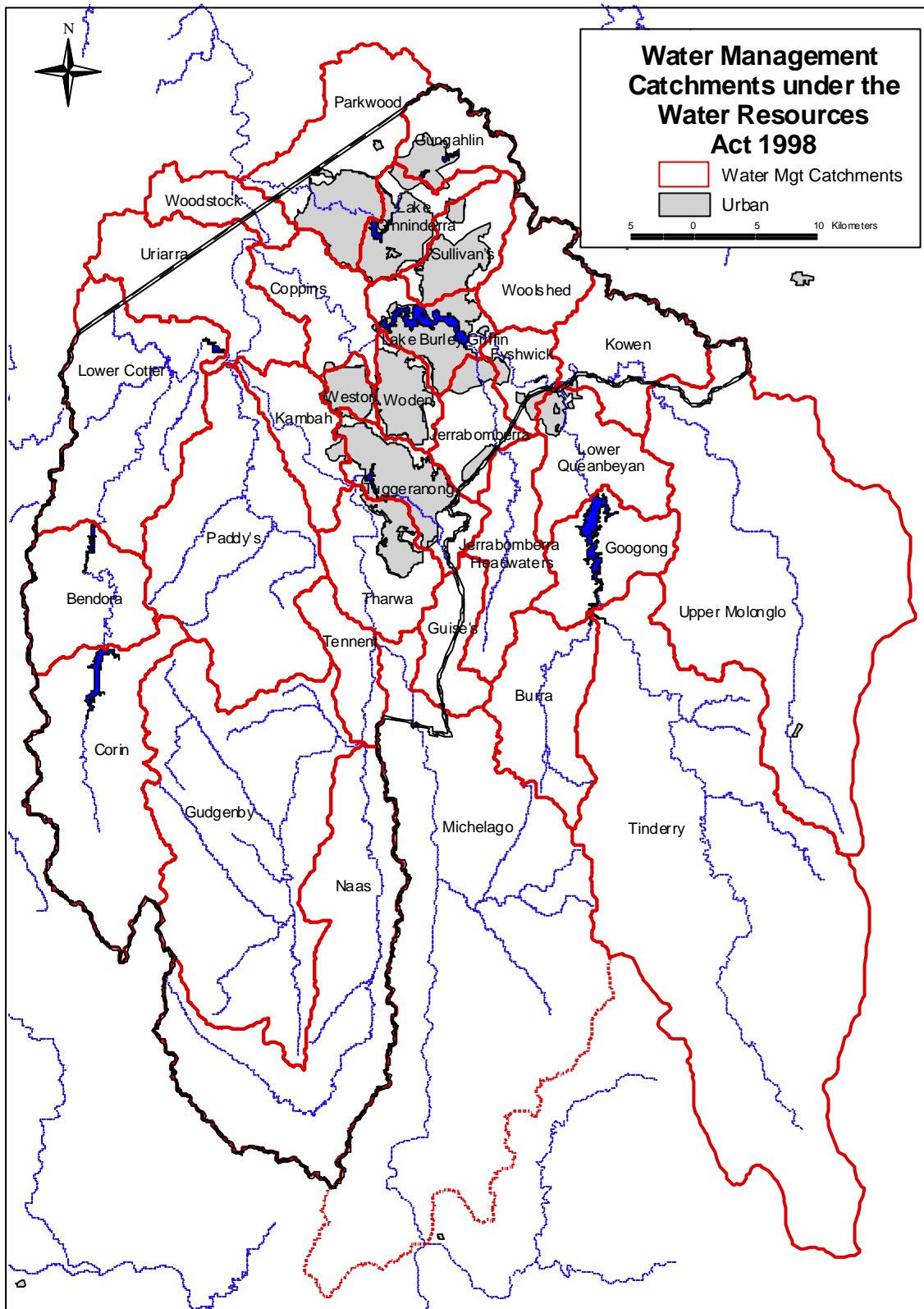


Figure 16: Water Catchments Map

Details of licences and allocations issued and water use are provided in Table 5 to Table 9.

Type of licence/permit	No issued by 31 March 2001
Licence to take water	73
Drillers Licence	10
Water control structure permits	3
Bore construction permits	12

Table 5: Type and Number of Licences/Permits Issued Up Until 31 March 2001

Catchment Name	Licensed Volume		Annual use reported up to 31 March 2001	
	No of licences	ML	No of licences	ML
Coppins	1	3	1	37.5
Fyshwick	9	59	6	12.6
Guises	2	4	1	0.8
Jerrabomberra	5	120	1	4.2
Kambah	2	11	2	2.2
Lake Burley Griffin	4	9.5	1	2.3
Lake Ginninderra	2	17	1	22
Naas	1	2	1	2.3
Parkwood	3	10	-	-
Sullivans	2	17	-	-
Tharwa	3	23	1	10.7
Tuggeranong	2	6	2	0.9
Upper Molonglo	1	2	-	-
Weston	1	6	1	4.5
Woden	2	186	1	62.3
Woolshed	2	6	2	2.6
Total	42	481.5	21	164.9

Table 6: Licences to Take Groundwater by Catchment

Catchment Name	Licensed Volume		Annual use reported up to 31 March 2001	
	No of licences	ML	No of licences	ML
Fyshwick	10	1139	9	460.2
Gudgenby	1	2	-	-
Gungahlin	1	309	1	192
Kambah	1	192	1	191.9
Lake Burley Griffin	1	83	1	28.9
Lake Ginninderra	2	184	2	220.1
Paddys	1	60	-	-
Parkwood	1	10	-	-
Tharwa	3	55	-	-
Tuggeranong	1	42	1	42.3
Uriarra	1	8	1	0.01
Woden	1	2	-	-
Woolshed	3	45	1	8.7
Corin	1	29700	1	60103
Bendora		21000		
Tinderry		9200		
Googong		1200		
Burra		1600		
Total	28	64831	18	61247.1

Table 7: Licences to Take Surfacewater by Catchment

Catchment Name	Licensed Volume		Annual use reported up to 31 March 2001	
	No of licences	ML	No of licences	ML
Fyshwick	1	18	1	7.1
Gudgenby	1	24	-	-
Jerrabomberra	1	126	1	76.7
Sullivans	2	295	2	78.3
Uriarra	1	10	1	8.4
Woolshed	1	150	1	4.5
Total	7	623	6	175

Table 8: Licences to Take both Surfacewater and Groundwater by Catchment

No of allocations	Catchment Name	Total Volume(ML)
1	Bendora	21000
1	Burra	1600
1	Corin	29700
8	Fyshwick	92
1	Googong	1200
2	Gudgenby	18
1	Gungahlin	309
1	Jerrabomberra	20
2	Kambah	192
1	Lake Burley Griffin	83
4	Lake Ginninderra	201
1	Paddys	60
2	Paddys	19
1	Parkwood	12
3	Sullivans	318
4	Tharwa	61
5	Tinderry	10280
1	Tuggeranong	42
2	Uriarra	18
1	Weston	6
2	Woden	39
5	Woolshed	152
Total	50	65422

Table 9: Allocations by Catchment and Volume

Notes

1. An allocation is not needed where groundwater is taken from a lease dated before 11 December 1998.
2. Licensed volume is unlikely to equal actual use in any one year as actual use is averaged over a three year period.
3. Actual use was not due to be reported by 31 March 2001 for every licence included above as they had not been issued for a full year.
4. A person who holds a licence will not necessarily use water under that licence.