

# Review of the non-urban water metering framework

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## Introduction

The NSW Government is reviewing the non-urban water metering rules. It is almost five years since the reforms were introduced and it is time to assess the progress that has been made so far.

The review aims to identify what is and isn't working and how the rules can be improved to make it quicker and easier for water users to comply.

### Why is the government reviewing the metering rules?

The NSW Government remains committed to full implementation of the recommendations from the Matthews report, including the principle of 'no meter, no pump.'

While there is overwhelming support for non-urban metering, compliance rates are not where they should be. Most larger water users have accurate, tamper-proof meters in place. However, thousands of medium and smaller water users have not.

The review is looking at what is and is not working and how we can maintain momentum and speed up progress.

Effective measurement and metering of water take is vital. This will ensure our precious resource is being used fairly and sustainably and those doing the wrong thing are held to account.

### Why is the review happening now?

Five years have passed since the metering rules were first introduced and a review was always planned at this time to assess the progress made.

The rollout has been slower than anticipated and the review is looking at why and what can be done to tackle these problems and get the program back on track.

### What will the review do?

This review identifies what is and isn't working and how the rules can be improved to make it quicker and easier for water users to comply.

We received a wide range of community feedback during public consultation throughout October to November 2023 on the challenges implementing the non-urban metering rules.

These views are summarised in a What we heard report published on our website.

This feedback will inform recommendations to the Minister for Water.

### Will the current rules still be enforced by NRAR?

While the review continues, there will be no change to the regulations and compliance expectations that are currently in place. The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) will continue to take a fair and measured approach to enforcing the rules.

### What is the compliance rate?

While around 90% of large surface water pumps greater than 500mm have accurate meters installed on active works, many of the remaining works that don't comply do not yet have telemetry.

The second stage of the rollout covering northern inland water users has only a 25% compliance rate for active works capable of taking water.

On the current trajectory, it is estimated that it could take another 10 years to achieve full compliance with the metering reforms.

### Why is the compliance rate so low?

There are valid reasons why some water users have been slow to comply. These include difficulties accessing the right people to install new meters, confusion about the rules, disruptions to supply chains, the cost of equipment and severe flooding.

### What are the proposed changes?

There are a range of options that are being considered to respond to what we understand to be the key barriers to the metering reform.

The options for possible changes respond to the practical experiences of water users and DQPs implementing the rules over the last five years. They aim to remove bottlenecks and ease barriers to meter installation, while minimising undue costs on small water users.

You can read the consultation paper and the What we heard report on our website at [www.water.nsw.gov.au/metering-review](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/metering-review).

### How long will it take before these proposed options come into effect?

The feedback we have received will directly inform the recommendations to the Minister for Water.

### How can I provide my feedback?

Public consultation on an issues and options paper was open from October to November 2023. You can read the consultation paper and the What we heard report on our website.

### What is the benefit of metering?

Metering means we can measure water take and manage it, so everyone gets their share. This is especially important when ground and surface water sources (like rivers and streams) are low.

Accurate and timely water use data supports a range of critical functions from sustainable resource management to regulatory compliance and policy development.

This includes river model calibration, setting and managing extractions to water sharing plan limits, and water allocations to ensure responsible and equitable use of water resources.

### What are the metering requirements?

Under [non-urban water metering rules](#), about 95% of licensed water take capacity in NSW needs to be fitted with accurate, auditable and tamper-evident meters.

While many water users already use meters, these rules apply a consistent standard to metering to ensure we know how much water is being taken and whether it is according to the rules.

The non-urban metering framework is guided by four objectives that describe the practical application of the 'no meter, no pump' principle. These are to ensure that:

- the vast majority of licensed water take is accurately metered
- meters are accurate, tamper-proof, and auditable
- undue costs on smaller water users are minimised
- metering requirements are practical and can be implemented effectively.

### I have already invested heavily in metering equipment am I going to have to pay more?

The NSW Government remains committed to implementing the 'no meter, no pump' principle. The aim of the review is to make it easier to comply. Accurately measuring and monitoring the amount of licensed water we use is vital for effectively managing our water resources sustainably and fairly.

The options for possible changes respond to the practical experiences of water users and meter installers implementing the rules over the last five years. They aim to remove bottlenecks and ease barriers to meter installation, while minimising undue costs on small water users.