

Report card for the Cockburn River Water Source

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Water source context

Water Sharing Plan:	<i>Namoi and Peel Unregulated River Water Sources 2025</i>
Area:	1,117 km ²
Inflowing water source:	Nil
Receiving water source:	Peel Regulated River Water Source

River flows

Flow records:	4 years at Cockburn River at Cockburn d/s Weir (419114)
Stream type:	Perennial

Basic landholder rights

Domestic and stock rights estimate:	328 ML/year
Native title rights:	Nil at commencement of the plan

Licensed water entitlements

Total surface water entitlement:	4,392 ML/year	(96 licences)
Unregulated River:	4,325 ML/year	(83 licences)
Domestic and Stock:	67 ML/year	(13 licences)

Table 1. Access rules for management zones

Management Zone	Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Cockburn River Management Zone	Cease to take	Take is not permitted when flow is less than or equal to 2.5 ML/day on a rising river and less than or equal to 0.3 ML/day on a falling river at Kootingal Bridge Weir gauge (419114)	No change
Cockburn River Management Zone	Pumping restrictions	Take is not permitted when flows are between 2.5 ML/day and 0.3 ML/day (on a falling river) at Kootingal Bridge Weir gauge (419114)- (a) between 7 am and 7 pm from 1 September to 31 May, (b) between 7 pm and 7 am from 1 June to 31 August.	No change
Cockburn River Tributaries Management Zone	Cease to take	Take is not permitted when there is no visible flow at the pump site	No change

Table 2. Access rules for whole water source

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Take from in-river pools	Comply with the gauge-based access rule when there is one AND Take is not permitted when the in-river pool is below 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

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Take from off-river pools	Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below its full capacity	No change
Exemptions	<p>Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source, including for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and hygiene • Domestic use • Take from a run-off harvesting dam. <p>Specific licences are listed in Schedule 2 of the Plan.</p>	No change

Table 3. Rules for constructing surface water supply works

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
In-river dams	Permitted, subject to assessment	<p>Not permitted in third or higher order streams in this water source.</p> <p>An exemption for applications for town water supply purposes has been included.</p>
Protection for wetlands	N/A	<p>No new or amended works permitted within or 3km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.</p> <p>No new or amended works permitted within wetlands indicated within the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map unless there will be no more than minimal harm to the wetland concerned.</p> <p>This rule does not apply to replacement works.</p>

Table 4. Water trading (dealing) rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
INTO water source	No net gain. This means trade must occur out of the water source before the equivalent or less can be traded back in. Trade permitted into natural off-river pools.	No change
WITHIN water source	Permitted. Excluding trade from Cockburn River Management Zone into Cockburn River Tributaries Management Zone. Trade permitted into natural off-river pools.	No change
Protection for wetlands	N/A	Not permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland. Not permitted into wetlands identified within the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map. Trade between licences within the same WSP prescribed wetlands are 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 indicates that the water source has medium in-stream value. The identified potential risk from extraction is high for zero flow periods and high for base-flow and low flows. In 2020, a new gauge was installed, Cockburn River at d/s Kootingal Bridge Weir gauge (419114), however there is insufficient flow data to determine if this gauge is suitable to manage extraction. An amendment provision is proposed to review the rule after year 5 when more data is available.

Improving protection of wetlands

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) have recommended the replacement plan provide better protection for 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 on 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, Endangered Ecological Communities and any existing list in the 2012 plan.
- A map of the WSP prescribed wetlands identified for this plan is available on the department's website.
- More information on improving the 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.

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 including prohibiting new water supply works and trades within or near WSP prescribed wetlands.

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

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's [Public Exhibition website](#).