

A clear path to water meter compliance in NSW

The non-urban metering framework has been reviewed, with key changes to accelerate compliance.

The aim of the non-urban metering framework, introduced in 2018, is to ensure that the majority of all licensed water take is measured with accurate, auditable and tamper-proof meters. Despite widespread support, several roadblocks have caused delays in compliance with the metering framework. To speed up the metering reform, key changes have been recommended to ensure water resources are being measured and managed fairly across the state and water users can comply with their licence obligations.

Breaking down barriers to compliance

We will improve compliance rates and enhance water resource management by:

- Focusing resources where they are needed most, particularly towards larger and high-risk water users.
- Expanding the workforce of people who can install tamper-proof meters by increasing the ways people can become certified, providing better training and expanding the definition of duly qualified persons (DQPs).
- Providing outreach and support to DQPs to assist and support them in the field, troubleshoot to increase connections and reduce error rates.
- Making it cheaper, easier and faster for many water users to comply with the rules by setting less prescriptive measurement methods for small and low-risk water users while mandating recording and reporting of their licensed water take.
- Strengthening the enforcement powers of the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR).
- Extending compliance deadlines for coastal water users and for smaller volume water users.

Implementing these recommendations aims to ensure 95% of licensed water take in NSW is measured, recorded and reported by December 2026, if not sooner.

Implementation plan and timeline

The initial 12-month implementation plan prioritises the most important actions for accelerating metering compliance rates that should progress without delay.

Change the rules

How we will do it	By end 2024	By mid 2025
<p>Draft regulation amendments for consultation prioritising the recommendations that will have the greatest impact on accelerating compliance rates, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expanding definitions of who can provide DQP services to grow the market staging compliance expectations to focus on larger water users in inland NSW first (includes change to coastal compliance date) simplifying requirements for smaller volume and low-risk works. <p><i>Note that regulation amendments will be progressed in stages to ensure that urgent time-critical changes are not delayed, and resourcing for implementation can be prioritised appropriately.</i></p>	✓	
Make and commence highest priority regulation amendments that give effect to the proposed rule changes and consider stakeholder feedback.		✓
Update the Non-urban Water Metering Policy to reflect the new metering rules.		✓

Support duly qualified persons

How we will do it	By end 2024	By mid 2025
Stand up a new service to provide in-field support to DQPs to trouble shoot installation issues and address the backlog of defects.	✓	

How we will do it	By end 2024	By mid 2025
Develop step by step guides for selecting, installing and configuring meters and local intelligence devices to make it easier for duly qualified persons and reduce error rates.	✓	
Develop a new meter installer course specific to NSW that can then be delivered by a range of providers in order to increase training capacity in the market.		✓

Support and educate water users

How we will do it	By end 2024	By mid 2025
Provide water users with the opportunity to have their say on changes to the rules through public exhibition of the draft amended regulations.	✓	
Engage with water users to help them update their work approvals to reflect which works are taking licensed water and require metering and which do not.	✓	✓
Engage with coastal water users to ensure that they understand their obligations well ahead of the proposed compliance date.	✓	✓

Improve systems

How we will do it	By end 2024	By mid 2025
Continue to improve systems including the DQP portal to improve functionality and usability.	✓	✓
Commission an independent expert review of data logging and telemetry requirements and associated data systems.		✓
Trial reporting arrangements that seek to establish a single time-bound source of truth for the volume of water taken against a licence.		✓

Track progress

How we will do it	By end 2024	By mid 2025
<p>Publish quarterly public reports to track progress and ensure the effectiveness of the implementation initiatives which will increase transparency and accountability for progress.</p> <p><i>Note that if compliance rates do not increase as required, business case and options for more direct government intervention will be developed towards the end of first 12 months.</i></p>	✓	✓

Recommended compliance requirements and due dates

Works	Measurement requirements	Compliance date
All surface water pumps ≥ 500 mm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS4747 compliant meter DQP validation LID and telemetry 	Must comply now
All works nominated by total entitlement ≥ 100 ML, unless otherwise exempt ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS4747 compliant meter DQP validation LID and telemetry 	Inland water users must comply now Coastal water users must comply by 1 December 2026
All works nominated by total entitlements of >15 and <100 ML, unless otherwise exempt ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pattern-approved meter Mandatory take reporting <i>DQP validation and LID/telemetry optional</i> 	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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No meter mandated, but required if trading water Mandatory take reporting <i>Application to at-risk water sources to be considered further</i> 	Not applicable
Works not taking licensed water (unintended, inactive) Works not nominated by licensed water entitlements	No meter mandated	Not applicable

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