

Southwest Irrigation Development Guidelines

FACT SHEET

Overview of the process and requirements for new irrigation developers



This fact sheet outlines the Southwest Irrigation Development Guidelines (the Guidelines) and provides an overview of the process.

PART ONE: WHERE TO START

All developers of new irrigation developments (and significant re-developments) within the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Area must comply with the Guidelines.

Contact Southern Rural Water (SRW)

To commence the process, developers must contact SRW who will be able to advise on likely requirements and provide you with the relevant application forms.

The completed application forms provide the basis for preliminary assessments. Once SRW receive a complete application with payment, the process is started. SRW will typically then refer the application to all relevant referral authorities. At this point, SRW, the Irrigation Development Coordinator (IDC) and referral authorities will typically undertake a desktop analysis to examine readily known issues which may prevent the development from going ahead and/or have a large impact upon the viability of the development. A site visit may be required to clarify development issues that require further investigation.

Following this step, SRW will typically notify you if any further information is required.

NB: The onus of responsibility is on the Landowner to ensure that all relevant licences, permits and approvals are obtained prior to commencing works.

PART TWO: WHAT TO SORT OUT

1. Licences and Permits

After the preliminary discussion with SRW and referral agencies, the developer will have an understanding of the licences and permits they require. The key licences are a Works Licence (WL) and a Take and Use licence (TUL).

1.1 Take and Use Licences

All irrigated properties must have a TUL¹ to enable water to be applied to land for the purpose of growing crops/pasture. SRW are responsible for issuing these licences. One of the considerations in granting a licence is whether the proposed water use is consistent with the water-use objectives.

Water-use objectives

Water-use objectives (*Water Act (Vic) 1989*) are aimed at minimising the impacts of water use on other persons and the environment.

These include:

- Managing groundwater infiltration
- Managing drainage disposal
- Minimising salinity
- Protecting biodiversity
- Minimising the cumulative impacts of water use.

In considering the Take and Use licence application, the Water Corporation must have regard to issues relevant to the associated works licence application. A Take and Use licence will not be issued in isolation from a Works Licence.

1.2 Works Licence

A Works Licence is required to construct and operate water delivery infrastructure (pumps and pipelines) across Crown Land to deliver water to the property boundary. A Works Licence will not be issued in isolation from a Take and Use licence.

¹A Take and Use licence applies to either a fixed term or ongoing entitlement to take and use water from an undeclared waterway, catchment dam, spring, soak or aquifer unregulated streams,

groundwater). Each licence has conditions set by the Minister for Water which are specified on the licence.

Storage dams, Channels or Earthworks

If construction of a storage dam, channels (or earthworks deemed to have similar risks to dams and channels), are required to be constructed on-farm, the approval for these works is required under a Works Licence (Not the Take and Use licence).

Please contact SRW regarding works licences.

Annual Use Limits and Maximum Application Rates

There is a maximum amount of water that can be applied to land in a 12-month period from 1 July to 30 June. These amounts are known as annual use limits. They are specified on the Take and Use licence as a condition of use. Annual uses are based on a set of maximum application rates and are measured in megalitres (ML) per hectare per year.

For Take and Use licences, the licenced volume is the maximum annual application rate.



1.4 Licence Assessment Process Summary

The approvals process for the issue of a new licence, (or for expansion/intensification of irrigation requiring a change to an existing Take and Use licence), may involve any or all of the assessments listed below:

- Irrigation and Drainage Plan (IDP)
- Flora and fauna assessment
- Environmental risk assessment
- Aboriginal cultural heritage requirements.

Not all of these may be required. It depends on the risks involved at the site, and the complexity of the issues.

1.4.1 Irrigation and Drainage Plan

There are certain situations where Irrigation and Drainage Plans are not required or are not required in full. Further advice should be sought from SRW and in the Irrigation and Drainage Plan fact sheet.

An application for a new Take and Use licence which is deemed to be moderate (may require an IDP) to high risk, or a major variation to an existing licence must be accompanied by an Irrigation and Drainage Plan (IDP) carried out by suitably qualified professionals.

The key purpose of an IDP is to match the way land is irrigated and drainage disposed of, with the characteristics of the land and soil, to meet the objective of minimising harmful side-effects, including to the environment. The standards are described in Schedule 1 of Ministerial Determination for [Standard Water Use Conditions](#).

The Irrigation and Drainage Plan consists of:

- a. A map of the proposed development
- b. Soil assessment - soil profile survey depending on the proposed irrigation system
- c. Irrigation design and management
- d. Arrangements for drainage disposal
- e. Biodiversity protection arrangements

On approval by SRW, the Irrigation and Drainage Plan becomes a condition of the Take and Use licence.

1.4.2 Flora and Fauna Assessment

Where the presence of stands of native vegetation, and/or the presence of threatened species has been identified, a formal flora and fauna assessment and a native vegetation management plan may be required.

These must be undertaken by suitably qualified professionals and will inform the biodiversity protection arrangements of the Irrigation and Drainage Plan.

Refer to fact sheet: Impacts to Native Vegetation.

1.4.3 Environmental Assessment

In cases where the proposed Take and Use licence poses direct and ongoing risks to wetlands, native vegetation, or the habitat of native animals, the Irrigation and Drainage Plan must specify suitable preventative arrangements, recording/auditing requirements, and specify corrective action as appropriate.

The arrangements may include the need for groundwater monitoring bores, which must be built and maintained at standards specified by SRW.

For developments where the environmental risks are deemed by SRW to be very high, a hydrogeological, water quality, or other risk assessment will be required. These are completed by a qualified expert and are usually desktop studies based

on existing information. Field investigations may be required if insufficient information exists.

This report guides the establishment of buffers adjacent to stands of native vegetation where deemed needed.

Refer to the fact sheet 'Buffer standards'

1.4.4 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Irrigation development proposals may involve cultural heritage considerations. Developers must adhere to relevant cultural heritage legislation. *The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, and the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, provide for the protection and management of Victoria's Aboriginal heritage (e.g., Aboriginal places, objects and human remains etc.) from irrigation development activities on private and public land.

All approval agencies/decision makers are responsible for ensuring that the developer is complying with this Act. This usually means having an approved cultural heritage management plan (CHMP).

More information is available from the Fact Sheet 'Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage'.

2. Planning Permits

2.1 Native Vegetation Removal

A planning permit is required from the relevant local council for any works within the Public Conservation and Resource Zone, and to remove, lop or destroy native vegetation on all land. Avoidance of impacts on native vegetation should be the first approach.

Please refer to the appropriate local council for information on how to apply for a planning permit. Cultural heritage and other issues will be considered in the planning application stage. The planning permit may be referred to the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning for further assessment.

Further information is also available from the Fact Sheet 'Native Vegetation Protection'.

2.2 Works Licence

In some municipal areas, proposed earthworks may require a license, particularly where earthworks are on the floodplain. Check with your local council for more information.

FURTHER INFORMATION

An information pack containing the following related fact sheets can be accessed at www.ghcma.vic.gov.au and discussed with the Irrigation Development Coordinator:

- Irrigation and drainage plan
- Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Native vegetation protection
- Buffer standards
- Applying for a works licence
- Roles and responsibilities

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