

Baseline Assessment Plans

Preparing and submitting Baseline Assessment Plans

The *Water Act 2000* ('the Water Act') creates an obligation for petroleum tenure holders to prepare a baseline assessment plan ('the plan') and submit this plan within a certain timeframe to the Chief Executive of the Department of Environment and Resource Management ('DERM').

The requirement to undertake baseline assessments of private water bores is a key step in the process of managing underground water impacts resulting from activities conducted by petroleum tenure holders. This information sheet outlines who has to prepare the plan, and what this plan must contain according to the Water Act.

Who must prepare a plan?

The requirement to undertake a baseline assessment plan applies to all petroleum tenure holders where production testing or production will or is being conducted. Petroleum tenure holders are holders of an authority to prospect or petroleum lease under the *Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004* or the *Petroleum Act 1923*.

When must a plan be submitted?

For petroleum tenure holders who have commenced production testing or production as at 1 December 2010, they must have the plan submitted to DERM within 30 business days of the legislation commencing unless the chief executive of DERM agrees to a longer timeframe.

For all other petroleum tenure holders, the plan must be submitted before the start day for the petroleum tenure, which is before the day that either production testing or production commences on the tenure. It is an offence under the Water Act not to provide the plan within the required timeframe.

What if I can't complete my plan by the required time?

DERM will consider extending the timeframe for submission of the plan. However, to seek an extension of the period to submit, a written request for extension must be submitted to DERM as early as possible, including the following information:

- status report on the work undertaken so far in preparing the plan

- explanation as to why the work cannot be completed within the legislative timeframe
- detail concerning the proposed dates for the commencement of production testing or production
- commitment to a new due date for the submission and a detailed rationale for this proposed date.

What must the plan contain?

A baseline assessment plan must identify:

- all the existing bores for the petroleum tenure
- any bores for which a baseline assessment has already been done for the relevant tenure
- each area ('priority area/s') of the petroleum tenure which contains bores for which a baseline assessment has not yet been completed
- a baseline assessment timetable for undertaking baseline assessments in each of the priority area/s
- the rationale or basis for the proposed timetable.

What is a baseline assessment timetable?

A baseline assessment timetable is part of the baseline assessment plan. The timetable identifies all the outstanding baseline assessments (i.e. those in the priority area/s) to be completed). The plan must state the rationale for the proposed dates in the timetable, including detailing any time limiting factors.

For tenures where production has not commenced or production testing for more than 30 days has not occurred, the timetable must provide for the baseline assessment to be undertaken for each bore by the earliest of the following:

- before production testing starts - for bores in a priority area within 2km of the production testing, and if during the production testing water will be taken from the aquifer supplying the bore OR a later date if agreed in writing by the 'owner' of the bore
- before production starts in the priority area
- the day after 30 days from production testing commencing (whether it is continuous or intermittent).

For tenures where there has been more than 30 days of production testing (either continuous or intermittent) or production has commenced, the baseline assessment timetable must propose a day by which the baseline assessments will be completed for each water bore in a priority area.

What does approval of my baseline assessment plan mean?

The chief executive of DERM will assess all baseline assessment plans. The chief executive may choose to approve the plan as submitted, impose conditions on the plan that the holder must comply with, or require the holder to amend the plan as directed within a specified timeframe.

Once the plan has been approved, the holder is legally required to undertake the baseline assessments in accordance with the plan. Holders may also apply to amend approved baseline assessment plans.

It is an offence under the Water Act not to undertake baseline assessments of water bores in accordance with an approved baseline assessment plan.

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For general enquiries contact the
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or visit www.derm.qld.gov.au