

Guideline for Preparing an Outdoor Water Use Conservation Plan

For Water Service Providers Outside South East Queensland or a Designated Region

July 2011

Superseded - for info

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1 Introduction

Amendments to the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* (the Act) were passed in April 2011 which changed the provisions for retail water service providers (providers) to prepare an outdoor water use conservation plan (OWUCP).

These amendments removed the requirement for providers outside South East Queensland (SEQ) to prepare an OWUCP, other than where the regulator is satisfied a provider faces a water security risk and is considered not to have implemented adequate measures to ensure the efficient use of water by the provider's customers.

This guideline has been prepared pursuant to section 571 (f) of the Act.

1.1 Requirement to prepare an outdoor water use conservation plan

Under section 133 of the Act, providers who provide a retail water service outside SEQ or a designated region¹ are required to have an OWUCP if:

- a. the regulator is satisfied—
 - there is a risk to a water service provider's water security; and
 - the water service provider has not implemented adequate measures to ensure the efficient use of water by the service provider's customers; and
- b. after consulting with the service provider, the regulator has given the water service provider notice requiring the water service provider to have a plan under this section.

The Act is administered by the Department of Energy and Water Supply (the department). The chief executive of the department is the regulator under the Act.

The Act can be accessed from the Queensland Legislation website at www.legislation.qld.gov.au.

1.2 What is an outdoor water use conservation plan?

An OWUCP aims to reduce outdoor water use and promote efficient outdoor water use by a provider's customers.

The purpose of an OWUCP is to ensure that water-efficient practices are implemented to increase the sustainability of Queensland's water supplies and reduce the risk of future water shortages. Providers should encourage and promote water efficiency.

The requirement for particular providers to prepare an OWUCP aims to reduce water security risks and encourage urban water users to apply water-efficient practices.

An OWUCP will include permanent, low-level outdoor water conservation measures and promote efficient outdoor water use.

As required under section 133 of the Act, an OWUCP must be prepared in accordance with any guidelines made by the regulator for preparing the plan.

¹ 'Designated region' means a region designated under the *Water Act 2000*, section 360D.

1.3 Aim of the guideline

The Guideline for Preparing an Outdoor Water Use Conservation Plan (the guideline) provides information to those providers who are required to prepare an OWUCP outside SEQ or a designated region. OWUCPs must be prepared in accordance with the guideline.

In the guideline, some of the regulator's requirements are mandatory as they are legislative requirements of the Act. In these cases, the guideline will use the word 'must'. The provider must supply the information required and in the manner prescribed. It is their responsibility to ensure that mandatory legislative requirements of the Act are met.

In other cases, the regulator's requirements are not mandatory. If the requirement is not mandatory the word 'should' is used in the guideline, meaning that providers are able to follow the guideline suggestion or to choose their own methods for achieving the requirements.

If a provider chooses to use their own method for satisfying the regulator's requirements, the regulator will assess the alternative approach against the policy objectives and the overarching aims of the Act. The explanatory material in the guideline is indicative of these, but the regulator may also choose to look at other supporting information such as best practice industry standards.

The guideline includes requirements for providers likely to require augmentation of their water supply infrastructure in the near future due to increasing demand. It provides separate requirements for providers that are not likely to require such augmentation (see Tables 1–3).

More stringent water saving measures should be adopted by providers in areas where it is expected that augmentation of water supply sources will be required within the next 10 years—or less—to meet demand. The 10-year lead time will enable water efficiency initiatives to be implemented and monitored and will also allow sufficient time to plan for and construct new infrastructure if necessary. Augmentation of existing water supply infrastructure is likely to be necessary in areas that do not have sufficient water supply to meet demand over the next 10 years or less. See the Appendix of the guideline for an explanation of the rationale for the 10-year timeframe to augment water supply sources to meet demand.

1.4 Application of the guideline

The guideline applies to particular providers under section 133 of the Act who provide a retail water service outside the SEQ region or designated region. The guideline has been prepared to assist providers in preparing their plans.

The Act defines a retail water service as the reticulation of water in a service area for a water service. The term does not include an irrigation or bulk water service in any area or the supply of recycled water in any area.

Therefore, an OWUCP will apply to residential, commercial and industrial (non-residential) customers of particular providers. An OWUCP is only applicable to water that has been supplied by the provider.

The requirement for particular providers to have OWUCPs does not apply to the use of household generated greywater or to water collected in household rainwater tanks (except where the rainwater tank is connected—or supplied by tanker—to the reticulated supply).

1.5 Water service provider roles and responsibilities

Under the Act, particular providers pursuant to section 133 (1AA) (a) and (b) must prepare an OWUCP in accordance with the guideline and include the matters outlined in section 133(2)(a) to (c) of the Act.

Other responsibilities include submitting the OWUCP to the regulator for approval, followed by implementing the approved plan to ensure that water efficient practices are undertaken by customers at all times.

1.6 Other relevant information

1.6.1 Relationship to other regulatory guidelines

Section 133(3) of the Act provides that the OWUCP can be part of a document prepared for another purpose provided the plan is prepared in accordance with the guideline and include the matters outlined in section 133(2)(a) to (c) of the Act.

Some providers may already have all or part of their OWUCP information contained within existing documentation or as part of another plan—for example, a drought management plan. In such cases, the provider is not required to extract or re-package the information into a new document. Such existing documentation may, as a whole, be forwarded directly to the regulator. This will apply provided that:

- the entire documentation submitted addresses all issues required by the Act and the guideline
- where existing documentation addresses only part of the OWUCP requirements, additional documentation is submitted to fulfil outstanding requirements
- the documentation clearly identifies the information which is intended to address OWUCP requirements.

2 Outdoor water use conservation plan requirements

In accordance with section 133(2) of the Act, an OWUCP must include information about all of the following matters:

- a. any service provider water restrictions imposed, or to be imposed, by the water service provider (for example, limiting the timing, method and volume of water used by customers)
- b. details of measures to reduce outdoor water use and promote efficient outdoor water use by the water service provider's customers (for example, a community education and awareness component)
- c. the way the service provider intends to implement the measures, including timing for implementing the measures and the way the water service provider intends to ensure compliance with the measures (for example, an implementation/compliance schedule).

2.1 Water restrictions

Section 41 of the Act provides that a provider may, if necessary, restrict any of the following:

- a. volume of water taken by or supplied to a customer or type of customer

- b. hours when water may be used in premises for stated purposes
- c. the way water may be used on premises.

Providers may impose the above water supply restrictions only if:

- there is an urgent need for it because of climatic conditions or water conservation needs
 - the available water supply has fallen to a level at which unrestricted use of the water is not in the public interest
 - the water service provider has a reasonable and comprehensive strategy for demand management for water and the restriction is essential to ensure the aims of the strategy are met
 - the water service provider has an outdoor water use conservation plan and the restriction is a measure to be implemented under the plan
 - the Minister has published a notice under the *Water Act 2000*, section 22, or a regulation has been made under the *Water Act 2000*, section 23, and the restriction is for the purposes of the notice or regulation
 - the water service provider is directed, under a water supply emergency declaration, a water supply emergency regulation or an approved water supply emergency response, to impose the restriction
- or
- the water service provider is directed by the regulator, under section 42(2), to impose the restriction.

The OWUCP must list water restrictions that will be applied by the provider. These restrictions should address permanent, low-level water use by customers. Such restrictions are intended to ensure that customers adopt efficient water use practices at all times.

Providers who are required to prepare an OWUCP under section 133 of the Act must achieve the water efficiency required outcomes outlined in Table 1 of the guideline.

Table 1 lists:

- minimum water efficiency measures to meet required outcomes that must be addressed by providers in their OWUCPs
- examples of acceptable solutions that may be used to achieve minimum water efficiency to meet required outcomes for providers in areas with
 - sufficient water supply for the next 10 years—that is, areas that do not require augmentation of water supply infrastructure to meet demand (column A of Table 1)
 - insufficient water supply for the next 10 years or less—that is, areas that are likely to require augmentation of water supply infrastructure to meet demand due to increased demand as a result of population growth or the establishment of a new industry etc. (column B of Table 1).

In meeting the minimum water efficiency for required outcomes, providers can choose—at their own discretion—to either:

- adopt the acceptable solutions outlined in column A or column B of Table 1
- develop alternative acceptable solutions.

Providers may propose alternative acceptable solutions to column A or B. However, they must justify the context as to why alternative acceptable solutions have been proposed—for assessment and approval by the regulator—to meet the minimum water efficiency for required outcomes. Other restrictions can be added to this list to suit their geographic and

climatic situation—for example, by imposing water restrictions on activities such as filling new or existing swimming pools and spas and on watering nurseries and turf farms.

More stringent water restriction measures should be adopted by providers in areas where it is expected that augmentation of water supply sources will be required within the next 10 years or less to meet demand. The 10-year lead time will enable water efficiency initiatives to be implemented and monitored and will also allow sufficient time to plan for and construct new infrastructure if necessary. See the Appendix of the guideline for an explanation of the rationale regarding the 10-year timeframe for augmentation of water supply sources to meet demand.

Note: information on the department's website <www.dews.qld.gov.au> will help providers assess and select water saving measures that are effective and appropriate to their particular region's climatic conditions. In addition, restrictions do not apply when reasonable actions are taken to prevent material risks associated with an accident, fire or hazard to health, safety or the environment.

Table 1: Water restrictions—minimum water efficiency measures: required outcomes and acceptable solutions

Note: providers can propose alternative solutions to column A or B to meet the minimum water efficiency for required outcomes. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that mandatory legislative requirements of the Act are met.

| Minimum water efficiency—required outcomes | Acceptable solutions | |
|--|---|--|
| | Column A Areas with sufficient water supply to meet demand over the next 10 years | Column B Areas with insufficient water supply to meet demand over the next 10 years |
| Gardens and lawns are watered efficiently, including non-residential parks and gardens, sporting fields and other green spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gardens and lawns must not be watered during the hottest six hours of the day, e.g. not between 10 am and 4 pm. Watering with a hand-held hose may only occur if the hose has a twist or trigger nozzle. | <p>Column A applies, plus watering may only occur using any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a bucket or watering can a hand-held hose which must have all of the following features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hose diameter of 15 mm or less a trigger nozzle a sprinkler that is attached to the end of a hose, which must have all of the following features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hose diameter of 15 mm or less a manual timer setting a maximum range of 30 minutes a fixed irrigation system consisting of a network of permanent piping connected to emitters. Operation of the irrigation system may only occur when fitted with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a manual timer with a maximum range of two hours an automated timer connected to a soil moisture sensor and/or rain sensor to prevent the system operating during rain events or where the soil already holds adequate moisture to sustain plant growth. |

| Minimum water efficiency—required outcomes | Acceptable solutions | |
|---|--|---|
| | Column A Areas with sufficient water supply to meet demand over the next 10 years | Column B Areas with insufficient water supply to meet demand over the next 10 years |
| Outdoor paved areas and other hard surfaces are cleaned using the minimum amount of water necessary at all times* | <p>Paved outdoor areas can be washed with water from a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bucket filled directly from a tap • hand-held trigger nozzle hose • high-pressure water cleaning unit. | <p>Paved outdoor areas can be washed with water from a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bucket filled directly from a tap • high-pressure water cleaning unit. |

* Subject to climatic conditions such as a dust storm.

2.2 Measures to reduce outdoor water use and to promote efficient outdoor water use

An OWUCP must state the details of measures to reduce outdoor water use and promote efficient outdoor water use by the provider's customers. Such measures should include an education and awareness program to inform people of the importance of restrictions—for example, how water restrictions will help reduce outdoor water use and what people need to do to use less water. Such measures are required to bring about long-term behavioural change, which is essential to the success of demand management.

Providers must promote efficient outdoor water use by promoting water efficiency programs within schools and by informing the general community—including householders and gardeners—about the importance of water efficiency.

Table 2 lists:

- minimum water efficiency measures to meet required outcomes that must be addressed by providers in their OWUCP
- examples of acceptable solutions that may be used to achieve minimum water efficiency measures to meet required outcomes for providers in areas with
 - sufficient water supply for the next 10 years—that is, areas that do not require augmentation of water supply infrastructure to meet demand (column A of Table 2)
 - insufficient water supply for the next 10 years or less—that is, areas that are likely to require augmentation of water supply infrastructure to meet demand (column B of Table 2).

In meeting the minimum water efficiency measures, providers can choose—at their own discretion—to either:

- adopt the acceptable solutions outlined in column A or column B of Table 2
- develop alternative acceptable solutions.

Providers may propose alternative acceptable solutions to column A or B. However, they must justify the context as to why alternative acceptable solutions have been proposed—for assessment and approval by the regulator—to meet the minimum water efficiency for required outcomes. Other outcomes can be added to this list to suit the information needs of

their community. Further information and examples are provided in the supporting information on the department's website at <www.dews.qld.gov.au>.

In addition, under section 133(2)(b) of the Act a provider who is required to develop an OWUCP must state in their OWUCP how they intend to implement the measures in Table 2 of the guideline and how they intend to ensure compliance with these measures (see Table 3 of the guideline for details).

Table 2: Promote efficient outdoor use—minimum water efficiency measures: required outcomes and examples of acceptable solutions

Note: providers can propose alternative solutions to column A or B to meet the minimum water efficiency measure for required outcomes. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that mandatory legislative requirements of the Act are met.

| Minimum water efficiency measure: required outcomes | Acceptable solutions | |
|--|--|--|
| | Column A: Areas with sufficient water supply for the next 10 years | Column B: Areas with insufficient water supply for the next 10 years |
| Support schools to promote water efficiency programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify primary and secondary schools to promote involvement in the department's Waterwise <i>Water: Learn it for life!</i> school program and provide links to the program on the council website Promote local water demand management education programs and initiatives. | Column A applies, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-ordinate education sessions and visits to local primary and secondary school students promote the benefits of involvement in the Waterwise, Sustainable Schools or a similar program. This can be done via partnership initiatives with local groups. |
| Community informed of the importance of water efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide links to the department's Waterwise information or local water efficiency information on the council website and display copies at relevant places. | Column A applies, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote local water efficiency information at community events, e.g. organising displays and distributing water efficiency information undertake quarterly radio or newspaper announcements about water restrictions arrange a customer service phone hotline for enquiries and reports of misuse of water. This service should be staffed by appropriately trained personnel with knowledge of local water restrictions and water efficiency practices. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display copies of the department's Waterwise or local gardening information and brochures at relevant places and link information about water efficient garden practices to the council website. | Column A applies, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> target key garden and community groups by distributing water efficiency or local gardening information at appropriate events, e.g. the annual show. |

2.3 Implementation of compliance measures

The OWUCP must state the way the provider intends to implement the measures including timing and the way the provider intends to ensure compliance.

An OWUCP must include an implementation and compliance schedule that identifies all of the following:

- each water restriction and any additional measures imposed or to be imposed to reduce outdoor water use
- when and how each water restriction and measure will be implemented
- the way the provider intends to ensure compliance with the water restrictions.

Table 3 lists:

- minimum water efficiency compliance measures to meet required outcomes that must be addressed by providers in their OWUCP
- examples of acceptable solutions that may be used to achieve the minimum water efficiency compliance to meet required outcomes for providers in areas with
 - sufficient water supply for the next 10 years—that is, areas that do not require augmentation of water supply infrastructure to meet demand (column A of Table 3)
 - insufficient water supply for the next 10 years or less—that is, areas that are likely to require augmentation of water supply infrastructure to meet demand (column B of Table 3).

In meeting the minimum water efficiency compliance outcomes, providers can choose—at their own discretion—to either:

- adopt the acceptable solutions outlined in column A or column B of Table 3
- develop alternative acceptable solutions.

Compliance will be maximised if the community is informed of the importance of restrictions and educated about water usage. Consideration should be given to which approach or combination of approaches will most effectively improve compliance. Monitoring water usage data will aid in providing information that can be used to enforce compliance with restrictions and also to evaluate the success of the OWUCP.

Providers may propose alternative acceptable solutions to column A or B. However, they must justify the context as to why alternative acceptable solutions have been proposed—for assessment and approval by the regulator—to meet the minimum water efficiency for required outcomes. Other outcomes can be added to this list to suit their local and regional area.

Table 3: Compliance—minimum water efficiency measures: required outcome and example of acceptable solutions

Note: providers can propose alternative solutions to column A or B to meet the minimum water efficiency compliance measure for required outcomes. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that mandatory legislative requirements of the Act are met.

| Minimum water efficiency measure: required outcome | Acceptable solutions | |
|---|---|--|
| | Column A: Areas with sufficient water supply for the next 10 years | Column B: Areas with insufficient water supply for the next 10 years |
| Appropriate level of monitoring and enforcement of water restrictions (from Table 1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor water metering data and respond to reports of misuse with site visits. Issue household audit reports to enable householders to monitor and record water use and savings for residents with significantly high water use. The provider should submit a report annually to the regulator detailing how they implemented acceptable solutions to achieve this water efficiency outcome. This report should include the timing of implementation and how the provider has ensured compliance by their customers.* | <p>Column A applies, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> where possible, undertake street patrols to monitor misuse of water, e.g. officers could wear uniforms and appropriate identification to ensure water meter readers are easily identifiable to the public and serve as a visual reminder of water restrictions issue warning letters for first-time offenders providing information on restrictions and water conservation practices issue on-the-spot fines or written warning notices to those obviously and blatantly disregarding the restrictions take additional legal action for extreme cases of non-compliance. |
| An appropriate level of promotion of water efficiency programs in schools (from Table 2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider should submit a report annually to the regulator detailing how they implemented acceptable solutions to achieve this water efficiency outcome. The report should include the timing of implementation and how the provider has ensured compliance by their customers.* | See column A. |
| An appropriate attempt to increase the level of community awareness of the importance of water efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider should submit a report annually to the regulator detailing how they implemented acceptable solutions to achieve this water efficiency outcome. This report should include the timing of implementation and how the provider has ensured compliance by their customers.* | See column A. |

* It is recommended that the provider reports annually on how they implemented acceptable solutions to meet the required water efficiency outcomes from both Table 1 and Table 2. Note: this report could be submitted as part of another annual report sent to water users with their rates notices. Alternatively, this information could be reported within the Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) project report. A copy of the SWIM guidelines can be accessed from the *qldwater* website at <www.swim.qldwater.com.au>.

2.4 Authorising an outdoor water use conservation plan

If required to prepare an OWUCP under the Act, providers must comply with the OWUCP or penalties will apply. Therefore, an OWUCP should be signed off by an authorised officer

within the organisation—that is, a person with the appropriate authority to authorise the actions identified in the OWUCP—for example, the chief executive.

3 Submission and approval of an outdoor water use conservation plan

Providers required to prepare an OWUCP in accordance with section 133 (1AA) of the Act must submit the plan to the regulator for consideration and approval.

The timeframe for the submission of an OWUCP for approval by the regulator will be stated in the notice to prepare a plan as given by the regulator under section 133 (1AA)(b).

In approving the OWUCP, the regulator will take into consideration the requirements of the Act and the guideline. In considering whether to approve the OWUCP, the regulator must:

- ensure that the OWUCP is prepared in accordance with the guideline
- ensure that the OWUCP includes the matters outlined in section 133(2)(a) to (c) of the Act
- take into account cost considerations for the water service provider and its customers.

Under section 134 of the Act, the regulator must, after receiving an OWUCP for approval:

- approve the plan
- request the submitted plan be amended
or
- refuse the amended plan.

Table 4 outlines the action the regulator may take after receiving an OWUCP for approval.

Table 4: Outdoor water use conservation plan approval

| Outcome | Action by regulator |
|--|--|
| Approve the OWUCP. | Give the water service provider a notice of the approval. |
| Return the OWUCP to the water service provider in the first instance, and request the plan be changed and the amended plan be resubmitted. | Give the water service provider a notice stating: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how the OWUCP must be changed to make it comply with section 133(2) of the Act, and• that the OWUCP be amended in the way stated and returned to the regulator within the reasonable period stated in the notice. |
| Refuse the amended OWUCP if, after considering the amended plan, the regulator decides to refuse the OWUCP. | Give the water service provider an information notice about the decision. Note: a decision by the regulator to refuse the amended plan can be appealed. |

4 Changing an approved outdoor water use conservation plan

Section 135 of the Act provides that a provider may, with the regulator's agreement, change the OWUCP after it is approved.

The OWUCP, as changed in the way agreed by the regulator, is taken to be approved by the regulator.

5 Glossary

Terms used for the purpose of the guideline

Augmentation

Enlargement, growth, increase of water supply—see the Appendix for further explanation.

Bucket

A bucket and other similar vessel with a volume capacity of 20 litres or less.

Designated area

A region designated under section 360D of the Water Act.

Green space

A plot of undeveloped land separating or surrounding areas of intensive residential or industrial use that is maintained for recreational enjoyment.

Hand-held hose

A hose fitted with a trigger nozzle or twist action nozzle including a high pressure water cleaning unit that is held by hand when it is used.

High-pressure water cleaning unit

A water cleaning machine that operates a pump to increase the pressure of the water delivered for a trigger nozzle.

Rainwater tank

Covered tank with a minimum capacity of 1000 litres designed and installed specifically for the purpose of collecting rainwater from a building and any stand or other structure that supports the tank.

Sprinkler

Sprinkler as defined in the Queensland Water Commission Efficient Irrigation for Water Conservation Guideline, or a sprinkler approved by an Irrigation Australia Limited accredited professional as being an efficient sprinkler.

Trigger nozzle or twist action nozzle

A nozzle controlled by a trigger, button, twist action or similar mechanism which must be controlled by hand for the water to flow.

Watering can

A watering vessel with a volume capacity of 20 litres or less.

Terms as defined in the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*

Greywater

Wastewater from a bath, basin, laundry or shower, whether or not the wastewater is contaminated with human waste.

Premises

“premises means—(a) a building or structure; or (b) land, whether or not a building or structure is situated on the land” (as per the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*).

Water service provider

A person registered under Chapter 2, part 3, of the Act as a service provider for a water service.

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Appendix

Explanation of the 10-year rationale for augmentation of water sources to meet demand

More stringent water restriction measures should be adopted by providers in areas where it is expected that augmentation of water supply sources will be required within the next 10 years or less to meet demand. A greater demand management effort is required from providers in this category, as such an effort may defer the need to secure additional water supplies.

The need for new water sources can arise from either, or both, of the following:

- increased demand—for example, increased population growth
- a reduction in available supply which may be due to reduced yield during a drought or significant fluctuations due to climate change, which on average reduces the reliable yield from climate-dependent water sources.

In such cases, additional water sources can be obtained through a number of mechanisms, traditionally requiring the construction of infrastructure. For the purposes of the guideline, augmentation of water supply includes:

- constructing a pipeline, weir or dam
- building a desalination plant, dual reticulation system, or recycled water plant, including increasing the size of existing plants and distribution networks
- developing groundwater sources
- duplicating a bulk main distribution network
- purchasing unallocated water
- participating in a water trading scheme.

A 10-year lead time would allow sufficient time to achieve each of the following:

- implement demand management initiatives (1–2 years)
- determine the long-term effectiveness of these measures (4–5 years)
- augment water sources (3–5 years), excluding dams.

To avoid the risk of running out of water and to delay the cost of building new infrastructure, more stringent water restriction measures should be adopted by providers falling within this category.

Telephone enquiries

Water: 13 QGOV (13 74 68) business hours

Energy: 13 43 87 business hours

Visit: www.dews.qld.gov.au