

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parsons and Associates Specialist Groundwater Consultants ^{cc}, in collaboration with CCA Environmental (Pty) Ltd and Resource Management Services ^{cc}, was commissioned by the Water Research Commission to develop a Groundwater Licensing Guide to guide groundwater development and use applications.

- Aim**
- The overall purpose of the Groundwater Licensing Guide is aimed at allowing officials and practitioners to effectively and efficiently determine the appropriate authorisation process for the development and use of groundwater in a fair, reasonable and just manner that results in a consistent outcome.
- Principles**
- It is recognised the authorisation process is aimed at gathering sufficient information in an efficient and effective manner in order for an informed decision to be taken.
 - The authorisation process aims to avoid any administrative burden without compromising the responsibilities of the authorities or proponent.
 - The authorisation of groundwater development and use is founded on the principle that development must be environmentally sustainable and address the social and economic needs of the country.
 - Co-operative governance is the foundation on which authorisation is based.
 - To promote management of water resources without an unreasonable administrative burden, a hierarchical process is adopted that allows for authorisation of activities that could have minimal or no risk; while appropriate resources are required when an activity could result in significant impacts to the environment or geohydrological regime.
 - Qualified geohydrological input is mandatory when formal authorisation is required, both from the proponent or potential groundwater user and from the authorities' perspective.
- Guide**
- The Groundwater Licensing Guide is simple, based on a logical set of questions that address specific legislative requirements and aims to produce consistent results.
 - The guide is supported by information, guidelines and tools needed to determine the appropriate authorisation process.
- Limitations**
- Lack of clear guidance on what constitutes Schedule 1 water is a limitation in the authorisation of water entitlements.
 - Limits at which the national groundwater use general authorisations are set are extremely conservative and are at levels below those of Schedule 1 use. Revision of the general authorisations is required.
 - The EIA Regulations require a basic assessment be undertaken if the planned groundwater abstraction exceeds that generally authorised i.e. when DWAF stipulate the planned groundwater use is subject to being issued with a licence. This duplication of authorisation processes is contrary to the Constitution and legislative requirements of co-operative governance.
- Way Forward**
- A set of key issues have been identified that require further consideration if the overall objectives of licensing are to be met.
 - A single authority to manage the licensing process;
 - Clear procedures that need to be followed and information required for decision making;
 - Time frames within which the authorities will respond to Licence applications; and
 - The limits of abstraction at which Licences are required.
 - Promotion of the generic EMP to ensure potential environmental damage is minimised during exploration and training of officials in the use of the Groundwater Licensing Guide are also important follow-up actions.

