

State Water Policy: SW2007-P0122

Land Management Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Articulate State Water Corporation's (SWC) vision for land management; and
- Assist SWC to comply with its obligations under the State Water Corporation Act 2004, the State Water Operating Licence and NSW environmental legislation.

2. Scope

The Land Management Policy will cover all land owned by SWC, potentially up to 100,000 ha. This includes dam foreshores, inundated land, land parcels associated with water management infrastructure, land parcels associated with office accommodation and workshop areas, and any other land owned by SWC. The policy is aimed at allowing commercial use of designated land, and conserving or enhancing the natural and cultural heritage values associated with the land.

3. Background

SWC is in the process of acquiring all land required for SWC to undertake the principal functions of the Corporation. The bulk of this land was originally vested in the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation and the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission. Negotiations for the transfer of ownership of land under major structures and associated foreshores are expected to be finalised in 2007/08.

The primary responsibility for land management was previously shared between government departments such as the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Lands, with secondary responsibility sometimes devolved to private lessees. Primary responsibility for land management in the future will fall to SWC although some existing land management agreements (eg leases) may continue until the agreement expires. The terms and conditions of existing agreements will be reviewed and amended, where appropriate, prior to renewal.

SWC will be accountable for managing large tracts of land primarily associated with the major water storages. A large proportion of this land is likely to retain important natural and cultural heritage values, particularly the foreshores and adjacent catchment areas.

Land management is intrinsically linked to the purpose for which the land is being used. The range of existing land use scenarios include:

- water conservation (inundated land or land under assets not used for any other purpose);
- environmental conservation, both formally and informally;
- grazing;
- recreation;
- accommodation; and
- commercial premises such as offices and workshops.

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Land Management Policy

The principal functions of SWC have impacts on the environment, both in land and water management. The scope for SWC to reduce the impacts on the landscape varies according to the land use and the specific issues that must be addressed. Land management issues include:

- reviewing land capability and land use options;
- balancing commercial returns versus environmental impact;
- maintaining the biodiversity of native flora and fauna;
- protecting sites of cultural heritage value;
- maintaining soil health;
- minimising soil erosion;
- controlling pest and weed species;
- fire control;
- public safety and public access; and
- appropriate waste management practices.

4. Major Drivers

Development of this policy has been driven by and influenced by a number of factors, including:

- The vesting of foreshore lands in SWC;
- A need to maintain and enhance the environmental, social and economic values associated with the land;
- The requirements of the *State Water Corporation Act 2004*, specifically noting the objectives of the Corporation defined under the Act;
- The need to provide a policy statement and clear direction for the development and implementation of the State Water Environment Management Plan;
- Compliance with environmental and planning legislation;
- Compliance with the *Rivers and Foreshores Improvement Act 1948*;
- The requirements of the Operating Licence;
- Existing use of these lands; and
- SWC's Corporate Plan.

5. Policy Statements

- SWC will manage its lands in compliance with all statutes and regulations.
- SWC will maintain or enhance, where practicable, the environmental, social and economic values associated with these lands, in accordance with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- SWC acknowledges Aboriginal people and their rights to water under the Water Sharing Plans.
- SWC acknowledges that responsible land management is essential to ensure that the existing natural and cultural heritage values are maintained for current and future generations.
- SWC will ensure management decisions for land under SWC ownership will consider ecological health, natural and cultural values, social implications and economic viability as part of developing a practicable management regime.
- State Water Corporation will investigate a range of management options and techniques, including lease management, direct control, contract management

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Land Management Policy

and potential government and community partnerships, to ensure the future management of these lands is undertaken in the most appropriate manner.

6. Implementation

The bulk of land to be vested with SWC is associated with the foreshores and local catchment areas of the major water storages. SWC will therefore develop land management programs for each of the major storages in consultation with local stakeholders, Catchment Management Authorities and Aboriginal groups.

Traditionally, most of the on-ground land management activity was undertaken by several government agencies in cooperation with private lessees and other contracted stakeholders. Implementation of this Land Management Policy will see SWC assuming overall management responsibility for the land, although existing lease and contract arrangements are likely to continue, subject to review. This will ensure that the necessary on-ground resources continue to be available for implementation.

New or renewed leases will have an initial term of five years, with lessees having the option of lease extensions. SWC will be able to terminate leases at any time, if reasonable notice is given with reasonable cause shown for the need to terminate the lease. This provision gives State Water the opportunity, prior to the end of any five year lease period, to assess its own requirements for the alternative use of land in order to establish if it should terminate the lease.

The above arrangement for leases is an interim measure while land capability is reviewed, environmental and heritage assessments are undertaken, appropriate site specific conditions are developed and Land/Foreshore Management Plans are formulated.

Implementation will proceed in stages as outlined below:

- Clearly defining areas under SWC control and ownership – June 2007;
- Identifying the natural and cultural values associated with the land at a local and regional level – December 2007;
- Reviewing land use patterns and agreements so that existing natural and cultural values are maintained – December 2007;
- Assessing any limitations such as land capability or competing objectives (eg the unavoidable impacts on land of inundation) – December 2007;
- Develop broad measures to maintain and protect the natural, cultural, social and economic values, where practicable – April 2008;
- Liaison with key stakeholders – May 2008; and
- Finalisation of site specific Land / Foreshore Management Plans – June 2008.

The Customer Service Managers in conjunction with Corporate Services and Environmental Services, will be responsible for implementing the Land Management Policy.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

Professional land management expertise will be sought to effectively monitor land management practices to ensure compliance.

Land Management Policy

This policy will be reviewed and updated in conjunction with the mid-term and end of terms reviews of the Environment Management Plan. SWC will report on progress on implementing the policy in the Annual Report.

Adopted by: Board 6 December 2006

Issued by:
CEO

Issue Date: 7 March 2007
Issued to: All State Water staff

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Page 4 of 4