



Groundwater



Groundwater is a valuable resource in NSW. It supports a wide range of plants and animals in many diverse environments, and can be extracted for use in agriculture, industry and households.

Groundwater holds deep cultural significance for Aboriginal peoples. It is an important part of Dreaming stories and a source of spiritual meaning. For more than 65,000 years, Aboriginal knowledge of groundwater sources has been crucial for survival in Australia's arid regions.

There is increasing demand for reliable supplies of safe, accessible drinking water to support Australia's population. However, only about 30% of Australia's groundwater is drinkable. The rest contains overly high concentrations of bicarbonates or salt.

At a glance

How NSW is tracking

- Over the past three years, there were no exceedances of groundwater extraction limits, with a reduction in groundwater use overall due to good rainfall, reducing dependence on groundwater.
- Although monitoring across NSW indicates that groundwater-dependent ecosystems are in moderate condition and stable, information on the extent and condition of them is still lacking. More work is being done to address these shortfalls.

Groundwater and agriculture

Agriculture accounts for **75%** of groundwater use in NSW.



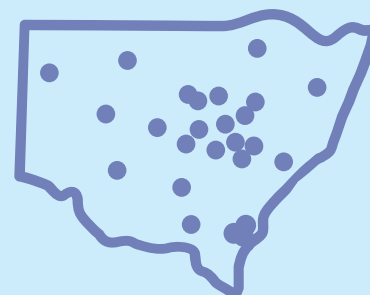
The big picture



To support their water needs, communities will increasingly turn to sources other than surface water. This means that global groundwater extraction levels will continue to increase.

Regional towns

More than **250** regional towns are now **reliant** on groundwater for most of their everyday water needs.
















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NSW status and trend indicators

These indicators relate to trends that can impact on groundwater availability and quality for both humans and the environment.

Indicator	Environmental status	Environmental trend	Information reliability
Long-term extraction limit: entitlements	 GOOD	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable
Aquifer sustainability	 UNKNOWN	 Getting better Stable Getting worse Unknown	No data available
Groundwater quality	 UNKNOWN	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable
Condition of groundwater-dependent ecosystems	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse Unknown	 Reasonable

Indicator table scales

- **Environmental status:** Good, moderate, poor, unknown
- **Environmental trend:** Getting worse, stable, getting better, unknown
- **Information reliability:**  Good  Reasonable  Limited

Indicator definitions

Long-term extraction limit: entitlements – trends in annual groundwater extraction in metered systems. Average extraction levels are assessed annually to ensure the long-term average annual extraction limit is not exceeded.

Aquifer sustainability – factors that impact on an aquifer's ability to continue being used for groundwater extraction. This indicator is listed as unknown due to lack of data.

Groundwater quality – assesses the quality of the water extracted from groundwater sources. This indicator is listed as unknown due to lack of data.

Condition of groundwater-dependent ecosystems – looks at the health and extent of groundwater-dependent ecosystems.