Lauren Moss
Minister for Environment and Natural Resources

More time for new water licencing arrangements in Darwin rural area

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The Northern Territory Government has announced a six month extension to water licence applications in the rural area for domestic residents who irrigate a garden area bigger than half a hectare (5000sqm).

The extension through to 30 June 2017, will give residents the opportunity to better assess their water use and make decisions accordingly. It will also enable the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to focus on licencing commercial users as a priority.

The existing exemption for stock and domestic water users who water less than half a hectare will remain in place with no requirement for a licence necessary.

Minister for Environment and Natural Resources Lauren Moss said the priority was to ensure water sustainability and security into the future for the sake of all Territorians.

“We have heard the concerns raised by rural residents at public meetings and have decided to extend the application process to give residents more time to understand their water usage and whether the new licencing will impact them or not,” Ms Moss said.

“We understand that water is a precious resource and that sustainability measures are needed to ensure it is secure for current users and future generations.

“These changes are about measuring and understanding water use in the Darwin rural area, not charging for water.

“There is approximately 5000 production bores in the Darwin rural region with only 12 water extraction licences in place. This is a significant knowledge gap impacting on the ability to effectively manage and plan water resources in the area.”

Since community consultation began Department staff have spoken to approximately 300 people over the phone and met one-on-one with over 100 users, as well as conducting public meetings and meetings...
forums. Based on these discussions, the vast majority of residential users will not need to apply for a licence.

Since the new licencing requirements were announced in July, there has been around 200 applications for a licence submitted.

“The changes are largely aimed at commercial users and the Department and NT Farmers Association continues to work closely with them to ensure they understand the new requirements and are accurately assessing their water needs so it can be captured under a licence arrangement.

“Again, I reiterate that the majority of residential users will not be affected by this and I encourage everyone to visit or call the specialised ‘Bore Central’ unit at Goyder Centre Palmerston for a one-on-one consultation about your specific household or needs.”

Acting chair of the Howard Water Advisory Committee Jan Hintze said the Committee was in favour of bringing in water management measures.

“The proper management of water is essential for water security for everyone both now and into the future,” Hintze said.

“To do this we need to gather the information on how much water is currently being used.

“One of the roles of the Water Advisory Committee is to assist the government in gathering information for use in their planning and I am confident that at no point will the government prevent people from having access to water for their horses, households, gardens and businesses.”

**Media Contact:**

Jake Hauritz – 0478 128 268