



Using a Consultant to Prepare Your Water Cycle Management Study

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WaterNSW manages and protects the drinking water catchments of Sydney, Shoalhaven, Southern Highlands, Illawarra and the Blue Mountains by regulating developments in the catchment areas using State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011 (the SEPP). The SEPP applies throughout the Sydney drinking water catchment.

Under the SEPP, the local council cannot grant consent for your development unless it is satisfied the development will have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality. To assess whether your proposed development has a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality, the council must be satisfied that the development:

- has no identifiable potential impact on water quality, or
- will contain any such impact on the site of the development and prevent it from reaching any watercourse, waterbody or drainage depression on the site, or
- will transfer any such impact outside the site where it is treated and disposed of to standards approved by the consent authority.

Developments should also incorporate WaterNSW's current recommended practices and practices which represent best industry practice to maintain, or where appropriate, enhance water quality.

The council must refer more complex development applications to WaterNSW for concurrence before it can approve the development. Before giving concurrence, WaterNSW may impose conditions to ensure a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality. If WaterNSW is not satisfied a neutral and beneficial effect on water quality can be achieved, it will not give concurrence and council cannot approve the development.

Water cycle management study and the development application process

For council and WaterNSW to decide whether your development will have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality, all development applications must include a water cycle management study. The information, reports and modelling you need to include in your water cycle management study vary for different types of development and their risk to water quality. More detailed studies will be needed for developments that have a higher risk. Minor developments with a low risk to water quality will only need basic information to be included in a water cycle management study, such as a stormwater report.

WaterNSW has a number of publications to help landholders and developers in the drinking water catchment to meet the requirements of the SEPP. The 'Neutral or Beneficial Effect on Water Quality Assessment Guideline 2015' explains how the neutral and beneficial effect test applies to developments. The guideline groups developments into five types according to how complex they are and their risk to water quality.

Developers and landholders should also refer to the WaterNSW publication 'Development in Sydney's Drinking Water Catchment – Water Quality Information Requirements'. It outlines the different reports and modelling you need to include in a water cycle management study, according to the type and size of your development.

Using consultants to prepare a water management cycle study

For simple developments, including alterations and additions to an existing dwelling, the water cycle management study will be relatively simple and can be prepared by someone with no specialist knowledge. However, for more complex developments the study will need to include information about a range of potential development impacts on water quality, including stormwater management, erosion and sediment control

during construction, and impacts from the disposal of wastewater in unsewered areas. In these cases, WaterNSW recommends that landholders and developers consider employing a specialist or consultant to prepare the water cycle management study. **WaterNSW cannot recommend specific consultants or specialists to prepare the study.**

You need to choose a consultant or specialist with care, especially where your proposed development and water cycle management study is large and complex. A poor quality study that does not satisfy WaterNSW's requirements will usually need further work and may cost you more. You can save time and money by choosing the best consultant for your needs.

WaterNSW has prepared the following information to help you choose a suitable consultant to prepare the water cycle management study to accompany your development application.

How do I find a consultant?

The easiest place to start looking for an environmental consultant, environmental engineer, planning consultant or other specialist who may be suitable to prepare your water cycle management study is to look for 'Environmental / Pollution Consultants', 'Engineers – Consulting' or 'Engineers – General' in the Telstra Yellow Pages or online.

Ask your local Council

Your council may have a list of environmental consultants or specialists who work in your area.

Professional associations

Professional associations may be able to help you choose a suitable consultant by providing contact details for their members. The following list provides a good starting point. However, there may be other professional organisations and associations whose members include consultants that can prepare a water cycle management study that meets WaterNSW requirements.

- Stormwater Industry Association
- Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand [🔗](#)
- International Erosion Control Association
- Planning Institute of Australia.
- Australian Water Association
- Australian Society of Soil Science [🔗](#)
- International Association of Hydrogeologists (Australian Chapter) [🔗](#)
- Consult Australia
- Engineers Australia
- Wastewater Australia
- Australian Contaminated Land Consultants Association

Word of mouth

Ask people or businesses you know who have used a consultant in the past to prepare a water cycle management study that met WaterNSW requirements whether they can recommend someone.

Call for an expression of interest

You can also find a consultant by calling for expressions of interest through an advertisement in a local/regional newspaper.

What to look for in a consultant

Preparing a water cycle management study may need a variety of skills depending on the complexity of the site and the development. The water cycle management study may need to detail a wide range of potential development impacts on water quality, including stormwater management, erosion and sediment control during construction, and the disposal of wastewater in unsewered areas.

You should think about the following factors when you choose a consultant:

- Does the consultant have experience in preparing water cycle management studies for developments in the Sydney drinking water catchment that meet WaterNSW requirements (you could ask for examples of previous studies they have prepared and ask for references or contact details of previous clients)?
- What relevant professional qualifications does the consultant have and what professional associations do they belong to?
- Does the consultant know and understand the relevant NSW legislation, including the planning and development control processes for developments within the Sydney drinking water catchment, the SEPP, and the relevant local environmental plan?
- Does the consultant know and understand all relevant guidelines and publications from WaterNSW about developments in the drinking water catchment? These include the 'Neutral or Beneficial Effect on Water Quality Assessment Guideline 2015' and 'Development in Sydney's Drinking Water Catchment – Water Quality Information Requirements'.
- Does the consultant know and understand WaterNSW's current recommended practices and standards for developments in the Sydney drinking water catchment?
- Does the consultant have appropriate insurance coverage?
- Does the consultant have a professional and ethical reputation?
- Can the consultant complete projects on budget and on schedule?

Disclaimer

WaterNSW has prepared this information in good faith exercising all due care and attention. However we make no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, about the relevance, accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of this information for your circumstances. You must decide if this information applies to your application, and whether you need to get expert advice about your situation.

For any queries, please contact WaterNSW's Catchment Assessments Team at Environmental.Assessments@waternsw.com.au or telephone 1300 662 077.