

KNOW YOUR WATER

What is beneficial use?

In the Northern Territory, beneficial uses describe how the community values and uses water resources. Declared under the Water Act 1992, beneficial uses guide water allocation plans and licensing by recognising different water quality needs for various purposes, including environmental, cultural, agricultural and industrial uses.

The beneficial use categories of water are:

- **agriculture** irrigation water for primary production, including related research
- **aquaculture** water for commercial production of aquatic animals, including related research
- **public water supply** water for drinking through community water supply systems
- **environment** water to maintain the health of aquatic ecosystems
- **cultural** water to meet aesthetic, recreational and cultural needs
- **industry** water for industry and other uses not defined elsewhere
- **rural stock and domestic** water for domestic and/or stock purposes
- **mining activity** as defined in the Environment Protection Act 2019 or a related purpose
- **petroleum activity** the exploration, extraction or processing of petroleum under an NT or Commonwealth Act, or related purpose
- **Aboriginal economic development** to provide water for Aboriginal economic development.



How are beneficial uses declared?

Beneficial uses are formally established to guide how water resources are protected and managed:

- Declared under the *Water Act 1992*
- One or more beneficial use categories can be chosen for a water resource
- Declarations may include water quality objectives or guidelines
- Objectives and guidelines are based on scientific evidence or expert judgement
- They support the protection, maintenance and long-term achievement of water quality

Plans cover a specific area and water resource within a declared water control district.

How are beneficial use declarations used in water allocation planning?

- Guide how water can be used in a plan area.
- Establish the quality of water that should be maintained or achieved in the longer term.

Can the public consult?

You can give input into the beneficial use declaration process as part of public consultation.

What are declared areas?



Declared areas are water resources formally recognised to support consistent protection and management across the Northern Territory.

- Beneficial use declarations form part of the legislative framework for water management
- They help protect and manage the NT's water resources
- The community determines how a water body should be used
- One or more beneficial use categories can be selected for each water resource



 **More information**

To find out more, go to our [beneficial water use](#) page.



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