



Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative

Of the water discharged from the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) into bore drains, approximately 90 per cent is lost through evaporation and seepage. Due to the uncontrolled discharge of this water since the early 1900s, many bores across the Basin have suffered a decline in pressure and flow rate. This waste of water is unsustainable.

To address these and other key issues, the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI) has been established.

What is GABSI?

The Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI) is a joint Commonwealth/state program to assist landholders to rehabilitate bores and replace bore drains with piped systems. It also addresses associated environmental issues such as erosion, and promotes improved management practices.

Through GABSI, the Commonwealth committed a national funding package of \$31.8 million over five years from 1999, with matching funds from participating states (including Qld, SA, NSW and the NT). From 1999 to 2004, GABSI Stage 1 capped 139 bores and replaced 4402 kilometres of bore drain with pipelines. These works have resulted in pressure recovery in most areas of the GAB and annual water savings of 54421 megalitres.

The funding was continued in a second package of \$42.7 million in Queensland for five years from 2004. The package is delivered via state agencies to build on existing incentive programs for bore rehabilitation and bore drain replacement.

In accordance with this, GABSI funding is used to finance projects that improve groundwater management and use on a property level.

Strategic Management Plan

The GAB Strategic Management Plan (SMP) was developed by the Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee (GABCC) and released in September 2000. The SMP details objectives, strategies and actions to be undertaken over the next 15 years to address the problems of the basin, including the target to cap and pipe the majority of artesian bores by 2015.

The GABCC is made up of representatives from federal and state governments, industry, environment and indigenous groups. In addition to preparing and implementing the SMP, some of the GABCC roles are to:

- identify basin-wide priorities
- facilitate information exchange across the GAB
- provide advice to government for developing program delivery and evaluation.

What is involved?

For landholders interested in taking part in the initiative, the steps involved in the process are shown on page 2. The Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW) advertises for applications through local radio and newspapers at the start of each year.

A detailed application must be completed.

Part of the landholder's application is to submit a map of their property to a scale with information that:

- shows the location of infrastructure such as fences, paddocks and bore drains
- the landholder's proposal for the location of pipelines and water troughs.

The map is a large part of the selection process.

Developing a property plan

NRW staff met with the landholder to develop a property plan. The property plan uses the map to identify the best position for watering points and incorporates natural resource management issues and property management strategies.

How projects are funded

GABSI provides significant subsidies towards the cost of a project. The percentage of subsidy is determined by the nature of the work, whether it is:

- bore rehabilitation; or
- bore drain replacement (piping).

For bore rehabilitation, all costs associated with the rehabilitation and capping of bores is subsidised to a maximum of 80 per cent. This includes all investigation, design, materials and contract work. The remaining 20 per cent must be met by the landholder.

For bore drain replacement (piping), a subsidy is available for the survey, design, materials, and supervision components of the project. Landholders will meet 25 per cent of the cost in the Warrego and Surat zones, and 30 per cent of the cost in all other



management zones. In addition, installation costs of the piping schemes are at full cost to the landholder.

What are the benefits?

Capping and piping a bore has significant benefits for the GAB and for property management practices.

Some of these are:

- preserves and restores artesian pressure and uses GAB water more efficiently
- improves distribution of water throughout the property
- cleaner water supply for domestic and stock use

- reduces number of stock perishing in drains, especially in times of drought
- reduces feral animal habitat and invasive weeds
- improves property management.

Further information

For more information on GABSI or other fact sheets, please contact your NRW office or the GABCC.

March 2006
W69

For further information phone 13 13 04

