



GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT

AGENCY INFORMATION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This Agency Information Guide has been prepared in accordance with Section 20 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA Act).

ABOUT GOLDENFIELDS WATER

Goldenfields Water County Council was proclaimed under the NSW Local Government Act on 24 April 1997, and, from 1 July 1997, became responsible for water supply functions within the Local Government areas of Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Harden, Junee, Temora, Young and part of Narrandera.

These functions were previously carried out by Northern Riverina County Council (Electricity and Water) and the South West Tablelands County Council (Water Supply).

Goldenfields Water services an area of 22,526 square kilometres in the Riverina district of southern New South Wales, to the north of the Murrumbidgee River and to the south of the Lachlan River. The water supply system is designed to provide an adequate and safe supply of potable water to meet community needs. Goldenfields Water's supply system consists of five water schemes; Jugiong, Ora, Mt Arthur, Mt Daylight and Hylands Bridge.

Harden and Young Councils are retailers who purchase bulk water from Goldenfields Water and supply the water to retail customers in their respective local government areas. Cootamundra Shire Council receives bulk supply and retails water to customers in Cootamundra town, with Goldenfields Water supplying water to retail customers in Cootamundra Shire outside the town. The remaining five constituent Council's ratepayers are serviced directly by Goldenfields Water and include rural, commercial, industrial and residential customers.

AUTHORITY TO ACT

Goldenfields Water County Council is constituted under the Local Government Act 1993.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Goldenfields Water County Council is governed by a body of eight Councillors, each of whom are nominated by their respective general purpose councils every four years. In October each year these Councillors elect a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson for the ensuing twelve months.

The Council meets at 1.00pm on the fourth Thursday of each second month except for the December meeting which is rescheduled to avoid the Christmas period. For further information about Council meetings visit www.gwcc.nsw.gov.au

The role of Councillors, as members of the body politic, is to:

- Provide a civic leadership role in guiding the development of the Business Strategic Plan for Council.
- Direct and control the affairs of the Council in accordance with the Local Government Act and other applicable legislation.
- To participate in the allocation of Council's resources for the benefit of the area.
- To play a key role in the creation and review of Council's policies, objectives and criteria relating to the exercise of the Council's regulatory functions.
- To review and monitor the performance of Council and its delivery of services, delivery and operational plans and revenue policies.

The role of the Chairperson is to:

- Exercise in cases of necessity, the policy making function of the governing body of the Council between meetings of the Council.
- To exercise such other functions of the Council as the Council determines.
- To preside at meetings of the Council.
- To carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the Office.

The General Manager is the principal officer of Goldenfields Water County Council. The General Manager is generally responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the organisation and for ensuring the implementation, without undue delay, of decisions of the council.

The General Manager has the following particular functions:

- To assist the Council in connection with the development and implementation of the Strategic Business Plan and the Council's resourcing strategy, the delivery program and operational plan and the preparation of its annual report.
- The day-to-day management of the Council.
- To exercise such of the functions of the Council as are delegated by the Council to the General Manager.
- To appoint staff in accordance with an organisation structure and resources approved by the Council.
- To direct and dismiss staff.
- To implement the Council's equal employment opportunity management plan.
- Other functions as may be conferred or imposed on the General Manager by or under the Local Government Act or any other Act.

Council has three organisational departments to support the General Manager; Production & Distribution, Engineering and Administration & Finance.

The Production and Distribution section manages the delivery of water to our customers. This is achieved by sourcing water from five different extraction points, treating, storing, and reticulating this water to our customers. It also provides for quality assurance through a regular monitoring and testing regime.

The Engineering section manages all new and replacement capital works, including minor design and project / contract management functions. It also manages legal issues involving land matters, in particular the creation of easements to enable legal access to infrastructure that is located under private property (generally in rural areas).

The Administration and Finance section provides administrative, financial and customer support to Council's other sections, the General Manager and Council's external customers.

EFFECTS ON MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

In exercising its statutory functions, Goldenfields Water may affect members of the public in its operations including, but not restricted to:

- The replacement / construction of water delivery infrastructure
- The acquisition of land
- Inspection of customers premises to ensure compliance with relevant safety and regulatory standards
- The issuing of accounts and related services

Members of the public are most welcome to attend Council meetings and, with prior notice, are also able to address Council in the Public Access section of the meeting.

NATURE OF DOCUMENTS HELD BY GOLDENFIELDS WATER

Goldenfields Water holds many files, documents and instruction manuals concerning its operations. A number of documents are available free of charge by visiting our website www.gwcc.nsw.gov.au

Goldenfields Water holds the following documents:

- Policy documents
- Council business papers and minutes
- Plans
- Financial reports
- Press releases
- Customer bulletins
- Procedure manuals
- Specifications
- Reports
- Maps, plans and diagrams
- Publications, and
- Various other business documents.

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS, PROCEDURES AND CONTACT POINTS

In many instances, customer information relating to a person's own account, or information that is already publicly available may be provided or access given to documents by simply making a request either in person, by telephone, fax, mail or e-mail.

Under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, Council must release information unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure. There are four ways in which information held by Goldenfields Water can be accessed by the public:

1. Mandatory Release
Certain information must be disclosed on our website, free of charge. This includes policy documents, a current Agency Information guide, disclosure log and register of government contracts.
2. Proactive Release
Council can be asked what information it will make publicly available in addition to the information contained on its website. Frequently requested information or information of public interest may be readily available.
3. Informal Request
Specific information can be requested from Council. Unless there are good reasons to require a formal application, Goldenfields Water encourages the release of information where possible. Such information could include requests for personal information by the individual concerned.
4. Formal Application
Specific information that has not otherwise been made available can be formally requested from Council. In some circumstances access to information will require a formal access application.

How do I get information from Goldenfields Water?

- Search Council's website to see if it is already available.
- Contact Goldenfields Water and ask for the information. Council will decide whether the information you want:
 - Is open access or mandatory release information that is readily available. If it is, we will tell you where and how you can get the information.
 - Should be made available as part of a proactive release of information.
 - Can be disclosed to you through informal release for example where no third party information is involved.
 - Requires a formal access application, for example because consultation with a third party is required.

If making a formal application, access to documents can be obtained by making a request in writing to the Right to Information Officer. You are required to supply all relevant details and include the application fee. Applications may be lodged in person, faxed or posted to the Right to Information Officer. The Right to Information Officer is available during business hours of 9:00am to 4:30pm.

The Right to Information Officer may be contacted the following ways:

By mail: The Right to Information Officer
Goldenfields Water County Council
PO Box 220
TEMORA NSW 2666

By telephone: 02 6977 3200

By facsimile: 02 6977 3299

By email: office@gwcc.nsw.gov.au

Proof of identity may be required at the time the inquiry is made or the application lodged.

Fees and charges for formal applications

The following application fees are applicable:

Nature of Application	Application Fee	Processing Charge
Access to records by an individual concerning their personal affairs	\$30 *	\$30 per hour after first 20 hours *
All other requests	\$30 *	\$30 per hour *
Internal review	\$40 */**	Nil
Amendment of records	Nil	Nil

* Subject to a 50% reduction for financial hardship or public interest reasons.

** Refunds may apply as a result of successful internal reviews and successful applications for amendment of records.

Goldenfields Water may waive, reduce or refund any fee or charge payable or paid under this Act in any case that Council thinks appropriate, subject to the regulations.

Goldenfields Water may also request an advance deposit of up to 50% of the estimated processing charge, by advising of the estimated processing charge and giving at least four (4) weeks for payment to be made.

If any personal information held by Goldenfields Water is incomplete, incorrect, misleading or out of date, you have the right to request that it is corrected. Applications for correction of personal information in a document should be made in writing in the form of a letter. Any information to support the request should be included in the application. Once you have received documents under Right to Information, there is no charge to have personal information in the documents amended.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information regarding the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, please contact the Office of the Commissioner - free call: **1800 INFOCOM** (1800 463 626), or visit their website: www.oic.nsw.gov.au