



7 March 2013

Court conviction and fines for illegally sinking bores

The NSW Office of Water today welcomed the conviction and fines imposed by the Wagga Wagga Local Court for illegally sinking a number of groundwater bores on a property at Nangus, NSW.

The Magistrate found the driller, Mr Gordon Noel Briggs, guilty of all four charges brought against him, imposing a two year good behaviour bond and costs totaling \$2,083.

The landholder, Mr James Laurence Coe, was also found guilty of the four charges brought against him for the same offences. Mr Coe received a two year good behaviour bond and was ordered to pay a fine and costs totaling \$4,583.

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, said the proceedings related to the sinking of four separate bores at "Cooba East Station", Nangus, NSW without obtaining the relevant licences under the *Water Act 1912*.

"The illegal actions of the driller and landholder had the potential to impact on licensed water users, stock and domestic users and the environment by reducing the volume of water in the aquifers underlying surrounding properties," said Mr Harriss.

Mr Harriss said Mr Briggs, who held a current drillers' licence at the time of the offences, knew he needed a licence to sink the bores but failed to obtain one.

"Water theft and the illegal drilling into the State's aquifers puts the livelihoods of individuals, rural communities and the environment at risk."

"While the vast majority of water users do the right thing, some people still think they can illegally access water without getting caught."

"Today's ruling shows that the community will not tolerate illegal water-related activities in New South Wales."

Mr Harriss said the NSW Office of Water is committed to managing and protecting the State's water resources in a fair and sensible manner, but would not hesitate to take the appropriate action if people have broken the law including prosecution which could result in substantial fines or even jail terms.

Fines of up to \$1.1 million, and/or two years jail can be imposed against individuals for breaches of NSW water legislation.

"The NSW Office of Water takes all allegations of water breaches seriously and will not hesitate to bring cases to court when warranted," Mr Harriss said.

Anyone wishing to report suspected illegal water activities can do so confidentially on **1800 633 362** or emailing **watercompliance@water.nsw.gov.au**

ENDS

Media contact: James Muddle – 0407 103 507

Our news releases are on the web: **www.water.nsw.gov.au** Follow us on Twitter **@OfficeofWater**