



Hunter Water Corporation Media Release



Friday 6 December 2013

NOVEMBER RAIN MUSIC TO HUNTER WATER'S EARS

Hunter Water was just 10 days away from restricting the water it draws from Chichester Dam when heavy rain finally hit the region two weeks ago.

Months of unseasonably hot weather coupled with low rainfall in the Dam's catchment saw Chichester's storage drop to just 65%, its lowest point since 2004.

Hunter Water begins supplementing water from Chichester with reserve groundwater pumped from the Tomago Sandbeds when the dam level reaches 60%.

Hunter Water's Chief Operating Officer Darren Cleary said the rain fell just in time to prevent cautionary measures.

"Hunter Water had commenced preparations for redirecting water from the sandbeds to Chichester Dam when the heavens finally opened. When dam levels hit less than 60% the water becomes more susceptible to evaporation. Coupled with hot, dry weather this becomes a real concern for the water supply to the Lower Hunter," Mr Cleary said.

"On the 11th of November we had the extraordinary event where many parts of Newcastle were flooding at the same time as dam levels at Chichester were continuing to fall at the rate of half a percent every day.

"It wasn't until almost a week later when the region experienced a one in ten year rain event that the water finally fell in the right area. The rain was so intense that over that 2 day period the Chichester catchment received more than 20 week's worth of water supply.

"The last few weeks of November were the wettest on record and we can't count on an event like that to get us out of trouble next time dam levels drop to near 60%.

"Although total water storage is now at 95%, the fact our storages were only saved by a freak rain event demonstrates the need for a long term plan for water security in the Lower Hunter," he said.

Water Source	Storage at 15 November	Storage at 4 December
Grahamstown Dam	87%	97%
Chichester Dam	65%	83%
Tomago Sandbeds	85%	100%
Anna Bay Sandbeds	73%	73%
Total	85%	95%