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Grahamstown Dam Community Update

This is the first community update about the work we're doing at Grahamstown Dam. You're receiving this update because you came to one of our community sessions or registered your email address to receive more information.

As well as sharing new information with you, we'll do our best to answer your questions. If there's anything we haven't covered, please reach out to the project team [here](#).

Further reducing the water level in Grahamstown Dam

In July 2024, we took the interim action of reducing the amount of water stored in Grahamstown Dam to around 90% capacity. Since then, we made the decision to take further steps to increase community safety. During September, we reduced the top water level in Grahamstown Dam to about 82% capacity, so that the risk to the community near the dam is even lower in the event that an earthquake damages the dam's embankments.

We were able to take this action because we have greater certainty of water supply after receiving planning approval from the NSW Government to build the Belmont Desalination Plant. We'll start construction of the Belmont Desalination Plant later this year and expect that the plant will be operational within four years. In the event of a severe drought, our water storage levels can fall to critical levels in less than three years, however, when it's completed, the Desalination Plant will provide an additional rainfall-independent water source to improve our water security.

You can read more about the Belmont Desalination Plant [here](#).

Our overall water storage, which includes Grahamstown Dam, Chichester Dam, and the Tomago and Anna Bay Sandbeds, is almost at 90% capacity. This is a healthy position for us to be in to manage risk as we enter the warmer, drier months of the year.

You can read more about our water storage levels [here](#).

While we aim to engage with our community and seek their input on decisions that may affect them, as the dam owner, we have a responsibility to manage risks. We made the decision to lower the water

level in the dam to reduce the potential impact on nearby residents in the event an earthquake damages the dam embankments and water is released.

Updating the Emergency Plan

There is an existing Dam Safety Emergency Plan for Grahamstown Dam. Its purpose is to guide the actions Hunter Water, the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) and NSW Police take in the event of an emergency relating to the dam.

We are currently working together to update the plan, and this should be finalised within the next few weeks.

Emergency preparedness exercise

Once we've finalised the update to the Dam Safety Emergency Plan, an emergency preparedness exercise will be completed at Grahamstown Dam to ensure all agencies (led by SES and Police, with support as required from Hunter Water) are able to respond as effectively and efficiently as possible. Emergency preparedness exercises are routinely undertaken by response agencies and don't involve community members. The exercise is planned to take place early next year. Communications in the event of an emergency

We have received some questions about how residents would be contacted in the event of an emergency.

The lead response agency will contact you and give instructions on what action you need to take. You'll be contacted by:

- SMS text message alert sent to all mobile phones in the area (you don't need to register to receive these messages)
- Door knocking

The lead response agency for an earthquake is the NSW Police. The lead response agency for a flood is the NSW SES.

Strengthening the dam embankments

We are exploring the best ways to strengthen the dam's embankments against an earthquake but completing the actual infrastructure is expected to take between five to 10 years. We'll have some more information about this planned work to share with you in future updates. Installing earthquake monitoring devices at the dam.

The Safety Review recommends installing earthquake and embankment monitoring devices at the dam to provide an early detection of any changes following an earthquake. We're investigating the type and number of devices and where they should be best located. We'll have some more information to share with you in future updates.

How we engage with our community

If you would like to read more about our commitment to engage with you on our major decisions, see our Community Engagement Strategy [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

Grahamstown Dam Safety Team