



**Melinda Pavey**  
Minister for Water, Property and Housing

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

29 October 2019

### **NEXT STEP FOR HUNTER'S DESALINATION PLANT**

The NSW Government is taking the next step in drought resilience planning for the Hunter, with Hunter Water lodging its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Drought Response Desalination Plant at Belmont.

Minister for Water, Property and Housing Melinda Pavey said by obtaining planning approvals now, the Hunter region has an 'on the shelf' insurance policy, should the severe drought continue.

"Like all of NSW, the Lower Hunter is feeling the impact of drought. Last month, Level 1 water restrictions were introduced for the first time in 25 years," Mrs Pavey said.

"Running out of water is not an option, which is why Hunter Water is progressing the planning approvals now so that the plant can be built quickly and supplement the region's water supply, should the worst-case eventuate.

"If constructed, it's estimated the plant would supply up to 15 million litres of water per day. Although only a small portion of what the region would need under normal conditions, it provides a critical 'top up' to ensure the region won't run out."

Drought response desalination is part of the NSW Government's 20 year water security blueprint, the Lower Hunter Water Plan, in a suite of drought response measures for the region.

Extensive consultation has already been undertaken as part of the EIS development, and the community will have more opportunity to have their say when it is publicly exhibited later this year.

Hunter Water's Acting CEO Graham Wood said drought response desalination was an emergency measure, rather than part of Hunter Water's long term planning.

"The operation of a drought response desalination plant would ease pressure on our dams as they approach 15 percent capacity," Mr Wood said.

"Hunter Water continues to explore all avenues for conserving water and reducing demand on our drinking water supplies. This includes our Love Water conservation campaign, recycled water opportunities, and reduced leakage across the network."