



3 AUGUST 2021

Hunter Water welcomes planning approval for Belmont desalination plant

Hunter Water welcomes the NSW Government's announcement that planning approval has been issued by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for a desalination plant at Belmont to produce up to 30 million litres a day of drinking water in response to drought.

Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary, said the approval provides an additional source of safe and reliable drinking water for the region in the event of a severe drought.

"Desalination is one of only a few water supply options that is rainfall independent, helping us to continue to support our customers and communities regardless of changes in weather or climate.

"The Lower Hunter community gained a sense of what a prolonged and severe drought would be like when we all experienced the most recent drought through 2019-2020, which saw the introduction of water restrictions for the first time in many decades," said Mr Cleary.

"Fortunately, the drought broke with good rainfall. The Lower Hunter's water system can fall from typical levels to 15% in less than three years, even with the implementation of a range of drought response measures and restrictions. Had the drought continued beyond three years, our region could have run out of water.

"Our community has told us that in times of severe drought, they would support adopting significant restrictions that would reduce water use to around 100 litres per person per day. This would reduce overall total water demand on the system from typical levels of 180 million litres a day to around 125 million litres a day.

"Planning approval for the Belmont desalination plant gives us an additional tool to help close our supply gap during periods of drought, providing Hunter Water with the capacity to provide up to an additional 30 million litres of water each day."

"The Belmont plant is now part of our region's ongoing water security package. Hunter Water is finalising the review of the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, which will outline additional proposed supply and demand measures to ensure a resilient water supply for our region that caters for growth and can respond to the impacts of drought and climate variability," said Mr Cleary.

The approved Belmont plant's water production capacity is double that originally proposed. The plant was increased from 15 million litres per day to 30 million litres per day to provide greater drought security and reliability, improve efficiency and deliver greater value for money for the Lower Hunter community.

The planning approval also confirms the direct ocean seawater intake system, which involves piping seawater from a kilometre offshore.

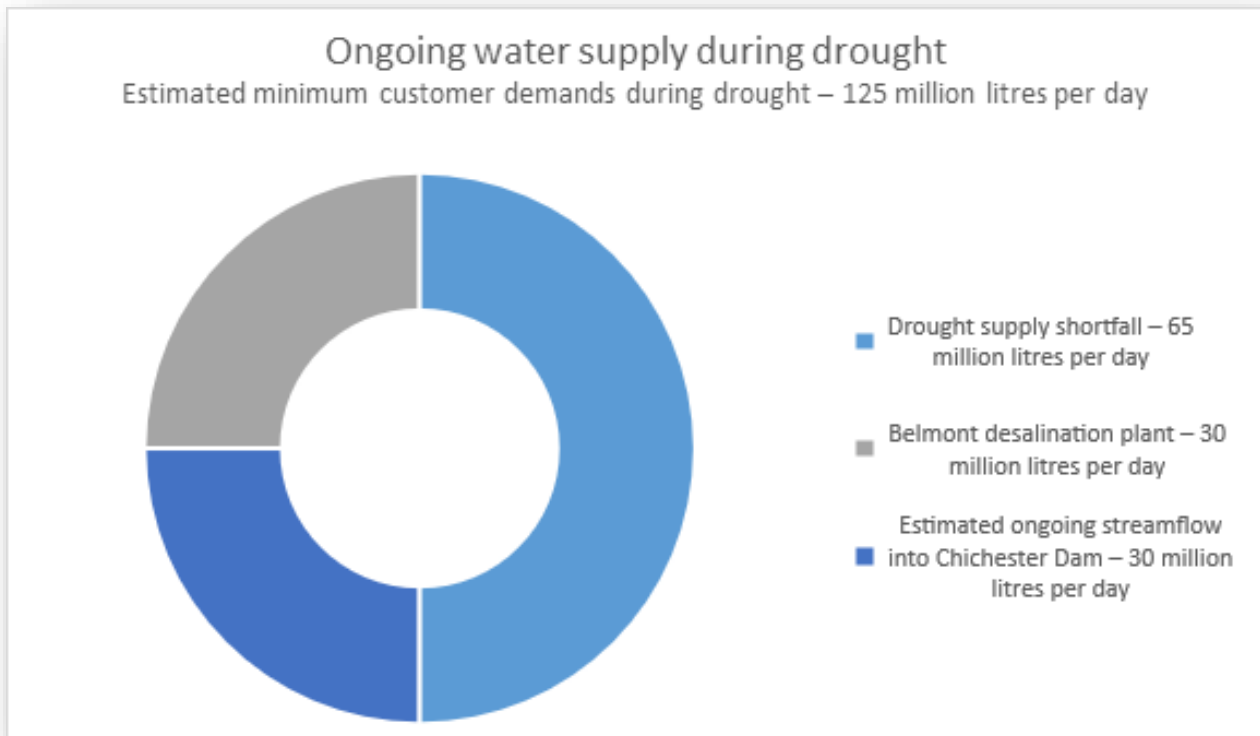
The approval is supported by comprehensive environmental impact investigations, which indicated that potential impacts can be mitigated through detailed design and delivery.



Media Release Hunter Water

The planning work for the desalination plant has been considered in the review of the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, which is exploring a range of supply and demand options for the Lower Hunter community.

The draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan will be released for public comment next week (Monday 9 August 2021).



[Belmont desalination plant helps cut the shortfall to 65ML/day with this remaining drought supply shortfall to be addressed in the draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan.](#)

Hunter Water media line: (02) 4979 9669 | media@hunterwater.com.au