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Periodic safety review underway at Chichester and Grahamstown Dams

New technology is helping Hunter Water assess and manage the safety of the region's largest water storages, with detailed reviews underway at Chichester and Grahamstown Dams.

Dam construction has evolved since the storages were built 97 and 58 years ago respectively. Dam safety is an important part of Hunter Water's role as custodian of the region's drinking water supply, and dams require regular inspections, surveys, maintenance, upgrades and risk management, to ensure they meet modern engineering and safety standards.

As part of our routine assessment program, we have started detailed reviews to re-assess the integrity of both dams. New technology, including satellite monitoring and onsite geotechnical surveys, supplements physical inspections and is providing our engineers and an independent Dam Safety Expert Review Panel with new insights on their condition.

Hunter Water's Executive Manager Customer Delivery, Clint Thomson, said the work would provide new information to inform how Hunter Water manages its dams into the future.

"Holding a combined total of almost 200 billion litres of water, the ongoing safety and management of our two largest water storages is a top priority.

"We know our dams have performed well when the region has experienced severe flooding and earthquakes in the past, and it's important we regularly review our dams using the latest technology and techniques to ensure they can continue to perform in all conditions, including rare, but severe events.

"The detailed safety reviews of Chichester and Grahamstown Dams are part of our commitment as a responsible dam owner and required to meet regulatory obligations. The reviews will inform detailed risk assessments for the dams. Given their age, the advancement in dam technology over that time, and the nature of these assessments, we expect the risk analysis will recommend actions which will enable the dams to continue their service to our community.

"The assessments are being led by Hunter Water, with advice from an independent Expert Review Panel," said Mr Thomson. We are also working with Dams Safety NSW to ensure we are meeting our regulatory obligations.

In addition to these assessments, Hunter Water will lead a routine simulation exercise this year with the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) and NSW Police, to test our response in the event of an emergency incident.

Results of the reviews and detailed risk assessments are expected in mid-2023.

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