



The Fountain

Draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan
Special edition

**Have your say
on exhibition
until Sun 26 Sept**



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As we navigate these uncertain times together, there is one thing that we can be certain of – water will continue to be essential to our region, to our local communities, to our lives.

For almost 130 years, Hunter Water has been supplying water, wastewater, stormwater and recycled water services to homes and businesses across the Lower Hunter region. We are proud of our record of service to our region and we are committed to continuing to do our work with excellence and to putting our customers and community at the heart of our decisions and vision for the future.

Hunter Water has embraced the opportunity to support the NSW Government in its efforts to ensure a secure water supply for the Lower Hunter as we face the challenges of a growing population, an expanding economy and changing climate conditions.

We have focused on improving the efficiency of our water system and have reduced leakage by 34% over the last four years. We have continued to work together to help everyone conserve water, and you have responded, reducing demand as a community by 11% in 2019-20. These actions make the most of what we have, increasing our ability to respond to drought. While these actions are essential, and will continue to remain a priority, by themselves they are not enough to ensure the Lower Hunter has enough water during a long and severe drought.

In preparing the draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, people across the region—from households and businesses to local councils and other stakeholders—have told us they want us to make better use of what we have, through continuing our efforts to reduce our demand for water. We are also open to investing in new sources of supply and improving our readiness for future droughts.

Hunter Water looks forward to receiving your further input, ideas and comments on the program of options proposed in the draft plan and how we can work together to deliver the final Lower Hunter Water Security Plan.

Darren Cleary

Managing Director
Hunter Water



About the plan

The Lower Hunter Water Security Plan aims to ensure our region has a resilient and sustainable water future that contributes to our health and prosperity and is supported by our community.

Water is essential for communities across the Lower Hunter to flourish. It nurtures our natural environment, keeps our households and businesses running, contributes to green and cool spaces in our cities and towns, keeps our industries operating, and our regional economies thriving. Water is deeply entwined with the spiritual, cultural, social and economic wellbeing of First Nations/ Aboriginal communities.

The draft plan is designed to ensure water security for the Lower Hunter over the next 40 years.

What we've learned from our community

Community engagement and discussions throughout the review of the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan indicated that our communities want:

- ✓ a safe and reliable water supply that can withstand drought
- ✓ consideration of all options
- ✓ investments to reduce demand for drinking water
- ✓ investments to minimise the environmental impacts of water supply initiatives
- ✓ a collaborative approach with stakeholders and the community
- ✓ continued use of water restrictions to make the most of our water resources in drought
- ✓ up-front investments, as opposed to acting reactively during drought.

Funding the plan

To meet community expectations, ensure a water supply that is resilient to drought, and to service growth requires increased investment. Customer bills will not change before 1 July 2024. Beyond that, the actions proposed are likely to increase annual residential customer bills by between \$75 and \$120 (a one-off increase of between 6 and 9% for the average residential customer).

The amount will depend on a range of factors such as the timing of major infrastructure works, and the increase may be phased.

Hunter Water pension rebate and hardship support measures remain in place.

Draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan

Our 40-year plan to provide a sustainable and resilient water supply for the Lower Hunter that improves our resilience to drought, increases the diversity of the system, meets the needs of a growing community, and keeps us adaptable for the future is summarised below.

PRIORITY 1: Safe drinking water

Safe drinking water is our highest priority. We will continue to provide high-quality drinking water for the health and wellbeing of our community and the future prosperity of the region.

Protecting drinking water catchments

Continuing to invest in catchment management and protection and maintaining a multiple-barrier approach to the supply of safe drinking water.

- ✓ Protects water quality at the source and makes the most of existing resources.



PRIORITY 2: Making the most of what we've got

We will manage our existing water resources wisely, working together with our community and stakeholders to make the most of our existing water resources, particularly before investing in new sources.

Water conservation

Increasing investment to support the Lower Hunter community to reduce water use by 17% compared to expected, and continuing to invest in reducing network leaks.

- ✓ Saves precious drinking water, more time to respond to drought and defers investment to service growth.



Recycled water

Increasing recycled water use for non-drinking end-uses by 1.3 billion litres through new and expanded industrial schemes, more public open space irrigation schemes, and continuing to explore viable opportunities for recycling in new residential developments.

Engaging with the Lower Hunter community about purified recycled water and building a purified recycled water for drinking demonstration plant in the region.

- ✓ Reduces demand for precious drinking water, rainfall independent water supply and defers investment to service growth.



Central Coast connection

Continuing to share water with the Central Coast via the Hunter-Central Coast connection.

- ✓ Optimises use of existing infrastructure and allows water to be transferred between our regions to where it is needed most.



PRIORITY 3: Improving the resilience of the system

Our climate is changing and the future is uncertain. We will act to improve our resilience to shocks such as drought as well as remaining adaptive to future risks and opportunities.

Belmont desalination plant

Building a permanent desalination plant at Belmont to supply up to 30 million litres of water per day.

- ✓ Delivers a new rainfall independent water supply and extends the time for reaching critical water storage levels in severe drought.



A Hunter Water connection to the Glennies-Lostock scheme

Preparing to connect to the proposed Glennies-Lostock scheme including new offtake infrastructure to supply up to 50 million litres of water per day.

- ✓ Optimises use of existing infrastructure, increases water supply diversity, and improves water security for the Upper Hunter, Lower Hunter and Central Coast.



Drought management plan

Continuing use of water restrictions in times of drought and water sharing with the Central Coast and implementing readiness activities for a drought response desalination plant at Walsh Point.

- ✓ Being prepared to ensure we can meet our community water needs through a long and severe drought.



Research and development

Continuing to investigate the Hunter River paleochannel and evaporation reduction options.

- ✓ Identify new ways to reduce demand for water and increase supply.



Monitoring, evaluation and review

Establishing actions and measures to assess the delivery of the plan.

- ✓ Helps us to be adaptable to change.



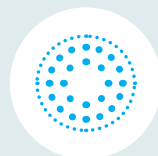
PRIORITY 4: Water for life

Water is an essential part of connection to Country for First Nations/Aboriginal peoples and supports liveable communities. Our plan will work to incorporate the values and participation of First Nations and Aboriginal peoples. Water supports liveable communities and our plan will seek to protect and restore our environment and ecosystems.

Cultural values

Improving knowledge sharing and increasing involvement of First Nations/Aboriginal peoples in strategic water planning.

- ✓ Increased participation and water values reflected in future planning.



Water for liveable communities

Improving the integration of land use and water planning to contribute to liveable communities.

- ✓ Green spaces and healthy waterways for the Lower Hunter community to enjoy.



Where our water comes from—now and into the future

This map shows our area of operations and our current water supply system. It also indicates our proposed program of actions.

Our existing storages, Chichester Dam, Grahamstown Dam and the Tomago sandbeds continue to provide the majority of the Lower Hunter's water supply and these existing storages will be augmented with new infrastructure.

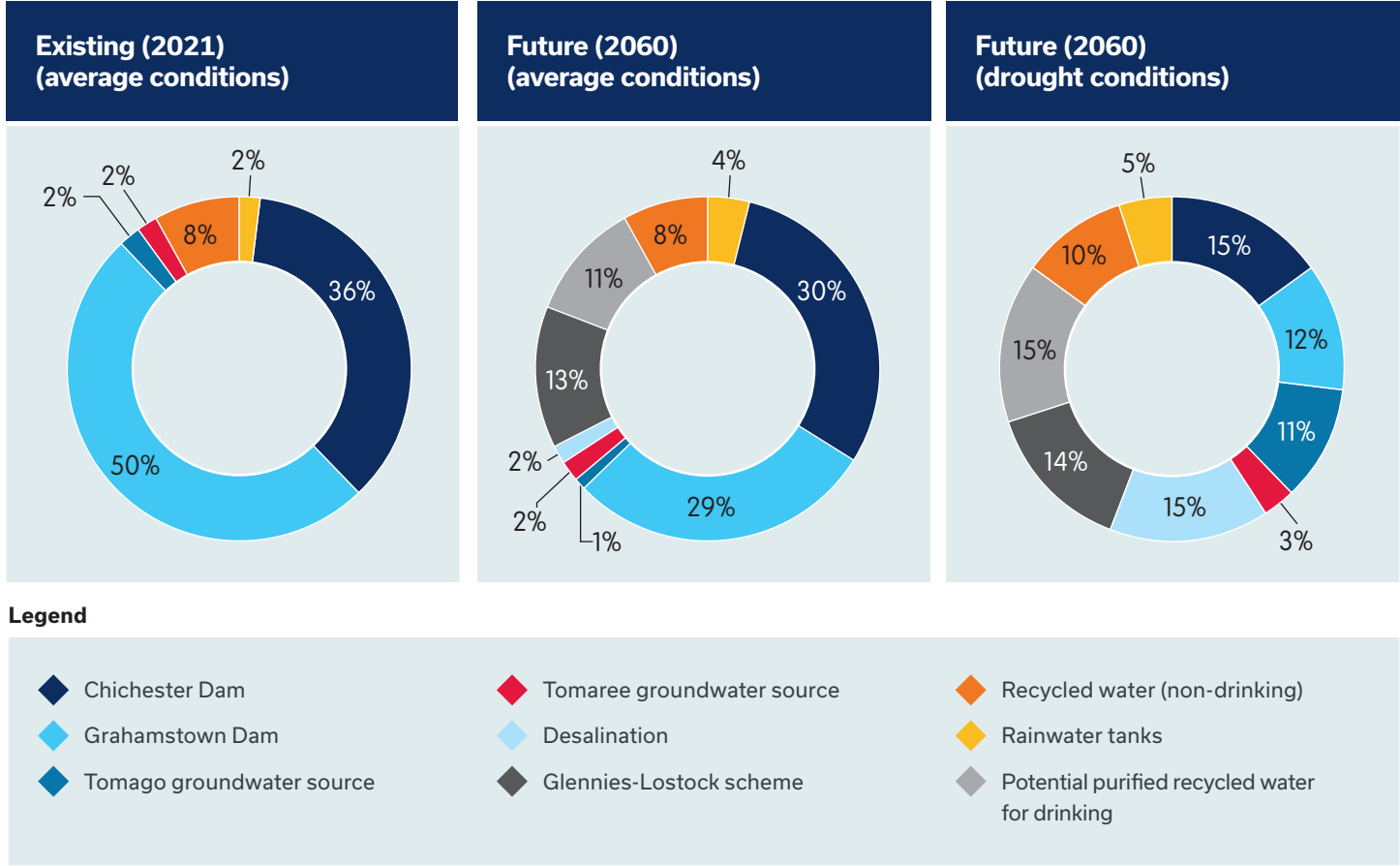
The plan proposes to make better use of existing dams with a Hunter Water connection to the Glennies-Lostock Dams scheme in the Upper Hunter.

By maintaining the connection between the Central Coast water system and the Lower Hunter, we continue to maximise the drought resilience of both regions.

The plan proposes the construction of a permanent desalination plant at Belmont, and planning for a future drought response desalination plant at Walsh Point.



Supply from each water source at existing and future (2060) water demands



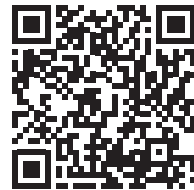
Note: The supply from the Tomago groundwater source and desalination in average conditions is small because these sources are assumed to supply minimal water when total storage levels are high, which occurs most of the time. Drought conditions represent the water supplied in a modelled drought sequence with total storage levels between 60% and 15%.

Feedback from the Lower Hunter community has been fundamental to our approach in developing the draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan and we want to hear your views.

The draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan is on public exhibition until Sunday 26 September 2021.

Find more information, including the full draft plan at Hunter Water's website: hunterwater.com.au/waterfuture or call us on **1300 657 657**

**We want
to hear
from you**



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COVID support

We recognise that this is a very challenging time for households and businesses. For those experiencing financial difficulty, we can extend your account to give you more time to pay, there's interest free payment relief available, and flexible payment options.

We're here to support you

Please visit hunterwater.com.au/assistance or call us for further information.



Sign up for Easy Pay

Take control and pay your water bills with affordable and more frequent payments via Easy Pay. Set up to pay the same amount each week or fortnight to easily manage your bills.

Call us on 1300 657 657 to find out more.

Get in touch

We're here for you when you need us.



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hunterwater.com.au



PO Box 5171
HRMC NSW 2310



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enquiries@hunterwater.com.au