



Figure 1. Timor Dam, Coonabarabran, June 2018.

## Emergency relief available to local water utilities for securing regional town water supplies

In New South Wales, local water utilities are responsible for water supply to regional towns and villages. They must manage their water supplies and, where necessary, impose restrictions to adequately service essential demand, and avoid the need for the cartage of water.

When regional town and village supplies are threatened by circumstances that could not be reasonably planned for, such as an extreme dry period or extreme water quality event, the NSW Government can help local water utilities to ensure critical human water needs are met. The Water Utilities branch within NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment can provide technical assistance and advice to local water utilities, and support when applying for financial assistance from the government.

This document describes the types of assistance available and the procedures that local water utilities should follow when seeking help.

The NSW Government has also established NSW Drought Hub (see [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub)), which provides a one-stop, online destination for information on a vast range of services and support available to primary producers, their families and communities to prepare for and manage drought.

### Types of assistance available

The government can help local water utilities by providing technical and/or financial assistance to assist in managing depleted or at risk supplies, including help to implement emergency capital works or to cart water to towns, depending on the particular situation.

Where the source of supply is at very high or imminent risk of failure or has failed as the result of an extreme event, undertaking emergency capital works may be the recommended course of action. Works can include constructing emergency bore supplies, creating a temporary or

permanent connection to another water source or water supply scheme, temporary emergency capital works<sup>1</sup> or developing new emergency water sources.

NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment can provide technical assistance in relation to drought and emergency response contingency planning. The government may also offer to reduce the cost of design and construction of approved emergency works to a local water utility through financial assistance.

In emergency situations or during extreme events, the government can also provide funding assistance to install high-flow standpipes to provide potable water filling points for water carters and (if offered by the water utility) domestic water for rural customers.

For longer-term infrastructure solutions, financial assistance may be available under the Safe and Secure Water Program.

Where water cartage is recommended as the most economical measure, the government can pay a subsidy for an agreed quantity for essential purposes. The assistance will be subject to the cartage allowances and cartage methods described in this fact sheet and needs to be agreed by the utility and NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Financial assistance can also be provided for the emergency provision of bottled water in exceptional circumstances such as where the supply has been contaminated and boiling water will not render the supply safe to drink.

## Initial assessment—emergency plan

If the security of a town water supply is threatened, and that town does not have an existing emergency or water carting plan, the local water utility should request advice from NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment regional staff. The utility should prepare an emergency plan such as a water carting plan or equivalent) that includes:

- ✓ the name of the community and its location relative to the nearest town
- ✓ a contingency plan for the current drought (drought management plan)
- ✓ an indication of the earliest date failure could occur
- ✓ a brief description of the existing water supply, stating whether or not it is reticulated, and information on whether the town is seweraged, unsewered, or uses septic tanks
- ✓ details of normal and current water consumption and any restrictions imposed by council
- ✓ the number of residents requiring a supply, the number of occupied dwellings and quantitative description of any other consumer types to be provided for, e.g. industries or businesses that need water to protect public health and meet essential needs
- ✓ the minimum essential quantity of water required by the community
- ✓ if known, the historical quantities of water carted
- ✓ a description of the existing source, and an analysis of its security and water quality
- ✓ potential for works to secure the supply against future droughts
- ✓ an analysis of the cost of various feasible means of safeguarding the supply, including cartage.

This report will provide the information required to support claims for assistance with emergency capital works or water cartage. Local water utilities that service communities with a history of water carting may have existing water carting plans in place. These plans should be updated and submitted to NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment when seeking financial assistance for water carting.

1. Assistance for temporary emergency capital works is for the minimum capital works required to ensure continuation of supply for critical human needs during the emergency.

## Water cartage

The provision of government assistance towards the cost of water cartage is subject to agreement between the water utility and NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on quantities and cartage arrangements.

If water cartage is the only economic solution, the utility should prepare an application for financial assistance in consultation with the department. If water is to be transported by road, the local water utility should get quotations from contractors if its own equipment is inadequate, unavailable, or is more costly to employ.

If the water is carted for drinking purposes, the utility must follow NSW Health's 'NSW Guidelines for Water Carters' document (visit [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au) and search for 'guidelines for water carters').

The application for funding should contain:

- ✓ a copy of the emergency or water carting plan
- ✓ details of any consideration given to, or steps taken towards, establishing an emergency supply from another source
- ✓ the location of the source of water to be used, the method of cartage proposed, the number of loads and frequency
- ✓ the cost of purchase and transportation of water
- ✓ copies of all correspondence with transport contracts on the subject of cartage.

The local water utility should initially contact their local NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment representative for advice prior to making its application for water carting subsidy to the Director of Water Utilities, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The subsidy for water carting will only apply to the minimum quantity required for essential domestic, commercial, industrial and institutional purposes in urban areas, calculated according to the guidelines set out later in this document.

The government may meet all freight charges in excess of the most recent weighted median step 1 usage charge calculated based on available reported data, as published in the most recent Regional NSW's LWU Performance Monitoring data dashboard, available at <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/water-utilities/lwu-performance-monitoring-data> . For 2019-20, the weighted median of the step 1 charge was \$2.22 per kilolitre.

For circumstance where it has been agreed that the provision of bottled water is the only viable option available (for example where supply can continue but the water cannot be rendered fit for human consumption such as by boiling) the government may meet all supply, freight and distribution costs.

Financial assistance is not available for operations and maintenance activities, or for costs of management by LWU staff. The local water utility is responsible for town water services and should proceed with cartage or other essential arrangements as soon as necessary, and must meet all costs pending the determination of subsidy.

## Guidelines for determining minimum requirements

Emergency or water carting plans should be developed to determine the minimum water requirements for the community concerned.

For councils developing a water carting plan, the basis of subsidy for water cartage is the minimum amount calculated as detailed in the following sections.

# Emergency Relief for Regional Town Water Supplies



## Fact sheet

### Residences

All quantities are given in litres per day per person.

Area/supply type	WC not connected to septic tank	Septic tank	Sewered
<b>Coast and Tablelands:</b>			
Unreticulated supply	60	75	-
Reticulated supply	65	80	95
<b>Western Areas:</b>			
Unreticulated supply	80	100	-
Reticulated supply	85	105	130

### Schools

Add the appropriate allowance for each person not included in the resident population. All quantities are given in litres per day per person.

Area/supply type	WC not connected to septic tank	Septic tank	Sewered
Coast and Tablelands:	5	17	37
Western Areas:	10	22	42

### Hospitals and public institutions

Add 330 litres per day for each patient in a hospital, and 154 litres per person per day for other institutions such as nursing homes.

### Isolated Western Division villages (population under 300 people)

Add 55 litres per day for each permanent resident.

### Other considerations

- ✓ public health is of paramount concern
- ✓ commercial premises, shops, clubs, public toilets, etc. require an allowance for residential and health-related needs, with each scheme being assessed on individual circumstances
- ✓ the number of non-permanent residents (demand can include an additional per person allowance based on average tourist stays per night)
- ✓ the services provided by the local water utility, and the number of people who need to use those services
- ✓ requirements for essential activities such as cleaning and washing in food preparation and service areas
- ✓ people should not be counted twice
- ✓ system losses to deliver the water to residents can include an allowance of up to 15% (needs to be justified).

# Emergency Relief for Regional Town Water Supplies



## Fact sheet

### Bottled Water

All quantities are given in litres per day per person.

Usage	Drinking water	Cooking	Personal hygiene
Litres/day/person	3	6	6

The subsidy for bottled water will only apply to the minimum quantity required to supply to the domestic population, depending on the circumstance and health advice.

### Emergency capital works

If emergency capital works are identified as the best means of maintaining essential supplies of water, the local water utility can apply for financial assistance. The utility should prepare technical information in consultation with NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. This should include:

- ✓ a copy of the technical report
- ✓ a full description of the proposed works, stating their location, whether or not they are permanent, and the quantity, quality and security of supply they will provide
- ✓ an estimate of the capital cost of the works
- ✓ envisaged dates of commencement and completion.

The local water utility should make its application for funding for emergency capital works to the Minister for Regional Water.

Financial assistance will not extend to the operating costs of the works, nor to the costs of managing supplies (such as the policing of rationing and waste). These are the normal responsibilities of local water utilities. The amount of funding assistance available for emergency capital works will be calculated in accordance with the Safe and Secure Water Program subsidy levels (visit [industry.nsw.gov.au/water](http://industry.nsw.gov.au/water) and search for 'safe and secure water program').

The government may also provide funding in emergency situations or during extreme events to assist with the installation of one high-flow standpipe in a water supply scheme. Standpipes may be required to provide filling points for water carters and (if offered by the water utility) domestic water for rural customers. The amount of funding assistance available is \$25,000 per high-flow standpipe, and applications for funding should be made to the Director of Water Utilities, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

### Further Information

Local water utilities are encouraged to contact their local NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment representative to discuss opportunities for assistance. Further information on the technical and emergency assistance available can be found at [industry.nsw.gov.au/water/water-utilities/technical-assistance](http://industry.nsw.gov.au/water/water-utilities/technical-assistance)

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