

## Water Restrictions – Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Drought Management Plan?

A revised Drought Management Plan was adopted in December 2015 to coincide with the pending enlargement of Chaffey Dam. The plan is a guide detailing how Council will manage its water supplies so that no one centre runs out of water. It is not meant to ensure that we have the maximum amount of water available all the time. It contains trigger points for introducing, increasing or relaxing water restrictions at each of Council's six water supplies.

### Why don't you apply water restrictions earlier?

There are a number of reasons why we don't apply restrictions earlier including;

- Rather than introduce restrictions on a random basis we have a plan - the Drought Management Plan. This plan helps to ensure restrictions are introduced in individual centres such that no specific location in our Region runs out of water. When there is plenty of water consumers should be able to use that water as they see fit as long as it is done sustainably – for example, not watering during the heat of the day. But as a particular supply reduces, restrictions are introduced to curb demand.
- The previous Drought Management Plan got us through the very severe drought in 2006-2007 with no centre running out of water
- We are in a far, far better water situation in Tamworth with the augmentation of Chaffey Dam than we would have been if the smaller dam was still in use. For example, the new storage was full in 2016 which equates to 102,000 Megalitres. Without the larger storage, the maximum amount the dam could have held in 2016 was 62,000 Megalitres. Given the conditions we have experienced since 2016, with the smaller dam it could be argued we would be 38,000 Megalitres worse off than what we are now.
- The Plan after review in 2015 sees Level 1 Water Restrictions introduced when the storage is 10,000 Megalitres higher than with the smaller dam.
- Water is released from Chaffey Dam not just for Council but for other customers who access water from Chaffey Dam, like irrigators. It is not effective to introduce severe restrictions in Tamworth/Moonbi/Kootingal when water is still being released from the dam for other uses. For example, in 2018-19 water will be released to supply 36% of the irrigators' entitlements - known as the Available Water Determination (AWD). If water restrictions curb demand to where more water is left in the storage, then this water may be sold to the irrigators and other customers through an increase in the AWD. The AWD is made for the water year – July to June. It cannot be reduced once made, but it can be increased.
- Customers don't have to wait for Council to introduce restrictions, they are free to restrict their water use as they see fit.

### How often is the Drought Management Plan Reviewed?

We currently review the Drought Management Plan after a drought and/or every five years. It is not constructive to review the plan more regularly than that because without a drought you

really don't have any information to make an assessment on whether the plan is achieving its objectives. The aim of the plan is to ensure no specific location runs out of water. This can only be tested in a drought so reviewing every two years or annually would not necessarily lead to improved outcomes.

### **I pay my rates, don't I have a right to use the water**

Owners of property connected to reticulated water pay an annual charge and a consumption charge. An annual charge is a charge levied against the cost for Council to provide water at a particular connection whether or not any water is actually consumed. A consumption charge is calculated from the amount of water actually consumed at the property.

Property owners/ residents are able to consume as much water as they want provided they pay the cost associated and they comply with any rules applied by Council like those in the Drought Management Plan.

### **Can I use water for my health safety and hygiene needs?**

Yes. Regardless of the water restriction levels all residents are permitted to use the necessary water to maintain essential health, safety and hygiene for themselves and others living in their residence.

### **Can I still water my pets and animals?**

Yes. Animal welfare should never be compromised regardless of the restriction levels. Where possible, Council recommends reducing the frequency of bathing pets if this does not compromise the health, safety and hygiene of the animal or residents.

### **What do I do if I see someone breaking the rules?**

Report it. You can report water restrictions breaches by contacting Council on 02 6766 5555, by email [trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au) or through the MyTRC App. Council will then investigate the matter further.

### **What happens to those who don't do the right thing?**

If Council Officers - who have the authority to issue fines - see someone breaching water restrictions then they can be issued with a fine of \$220 on the spot.

For all other cases when Council receives a report of a resident not adhering to water restrictions, the resident is issued a first warning letter. If the issue persists at the same property a second warning will be issued.

After the second warning letter, further breaches are subject to enforcement measures.

Water restrictions are legally enforceable under the 1993 Local Government Act and Council can issue a \$220 fine to residents who are found to be in breach of its current water restrictions. Following a fine residents can then have a flow restrictor fitted which limits the

amount of water that is available. The resident is also charged a fee to install and another fee to remove the flow restrictor.

### Can I still water outdoors if I have a rainwater tank or bore?

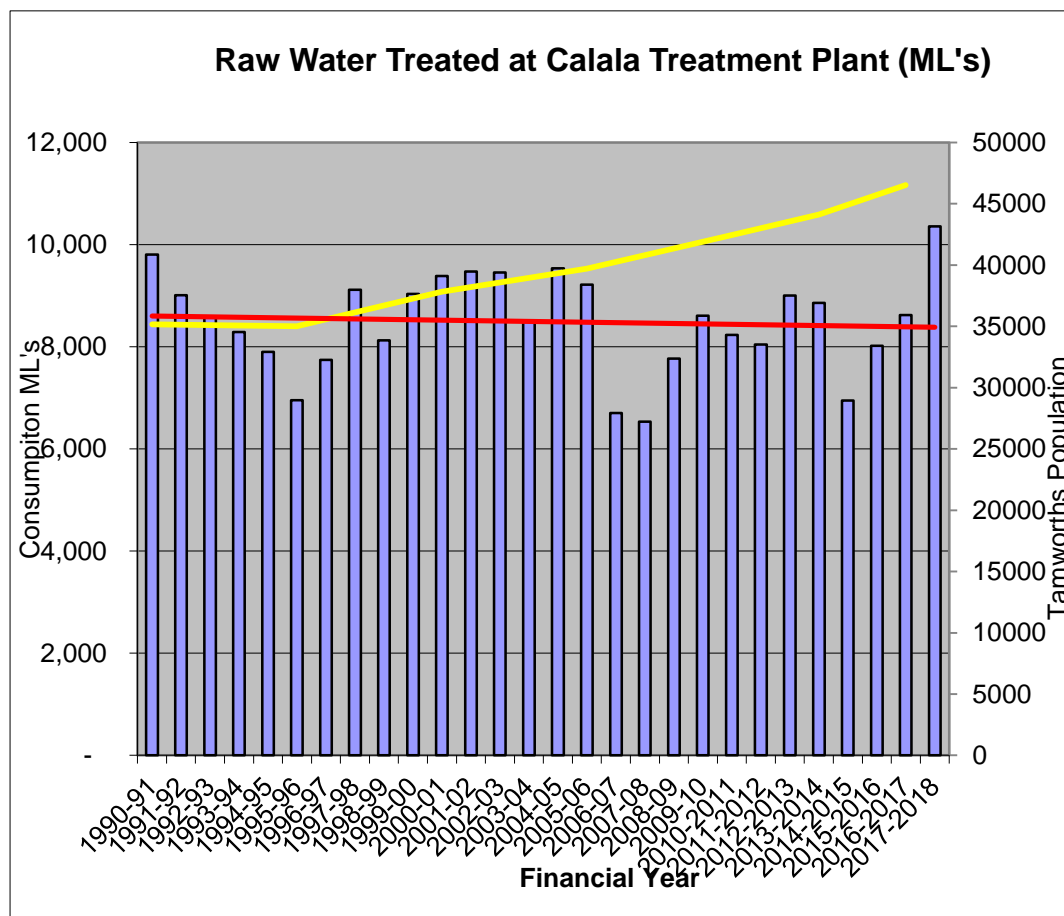
Yes but, you should first contact Council to inspect your tank or bore. Once confirmed that the treated water supply is not being used you will be issued with a "Tank or Bore Water In Use" sign to display at the front of your property. Using a non-Council issued sign may still lead to you receiving a warning letter for using water.

You can book a free tank inspection by contacting Council on 02 6767 5555 or email [trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au)

### How much water does Tamworth consume in a year?

The graph below shows the amount of water treated at Tamworth's Calala Lane Water Treatment Plant each year since 1990. It also shows the population increase in Tamworth over the same period – yellow line.

You can see that despite significant increases in population the consumption of water in Tamworth has remained relatively constant – see red line.



### **How much water do Festival visitors use?**

About three average days of the city's annual water use - which is less than 75 Megalitres.

Looking at consumption data for the last 10 years, the increase in water use during the Tamworth Country Music Festival is about the same as three average day's consumption.

Visitors to the town are expected to follow water restrictions just like any resident and they are subject to the same warnings and enforcement activities as residents if they are seen breaching water restrictions.

### **Do you put restrictions on to save water for Festival visitors?**

No. Water restrictions are put in place in line with the Drought Management Plan regardless of the time of year or the events being held.

### **Why doesn't Council abide by its own restrictions?**

Council does abide by restrictions with two exceptions:

-Where the area being watered is using groundwater or bore water. Water restrictions do not apply for the use of groundwater. In this case Council aims to have watering completed by 9am. Most of our parks and playing fields using groundwater have signs advising groundwater is in use.

-For preparation of high-profile events when normal watering is not enough to meet the additional demand placed on public facilities.

Under the Drought Management Plan, Council has a system where public parks, gardens and playing fields are prioritised from 1-5, with Category 1 the highest priority, Category 5 the lowest. As restrictions are introduced the lower priority sites stop being irrigated completely.

When Level 4 water restrictions are reached irrigation stops completely on all public parks, gardens and playing fields, unless they are supplied with groundwater supplies.

Council is working towards increasing the number of green spaces and sporting fields that are able to be watered using groundwater rather than drinking water.

### **Does Council own, operate and manage Chaffey Dam?**

No. Chaffey Dam is owned, operated, managed and controlled by the State Government Corporation - WaterNSW. Council is one customer accessing water from Chaffey Dam.

Other WaterNSW customers, mostly farm irrigators in the Peel Valley can also access water from the dam.

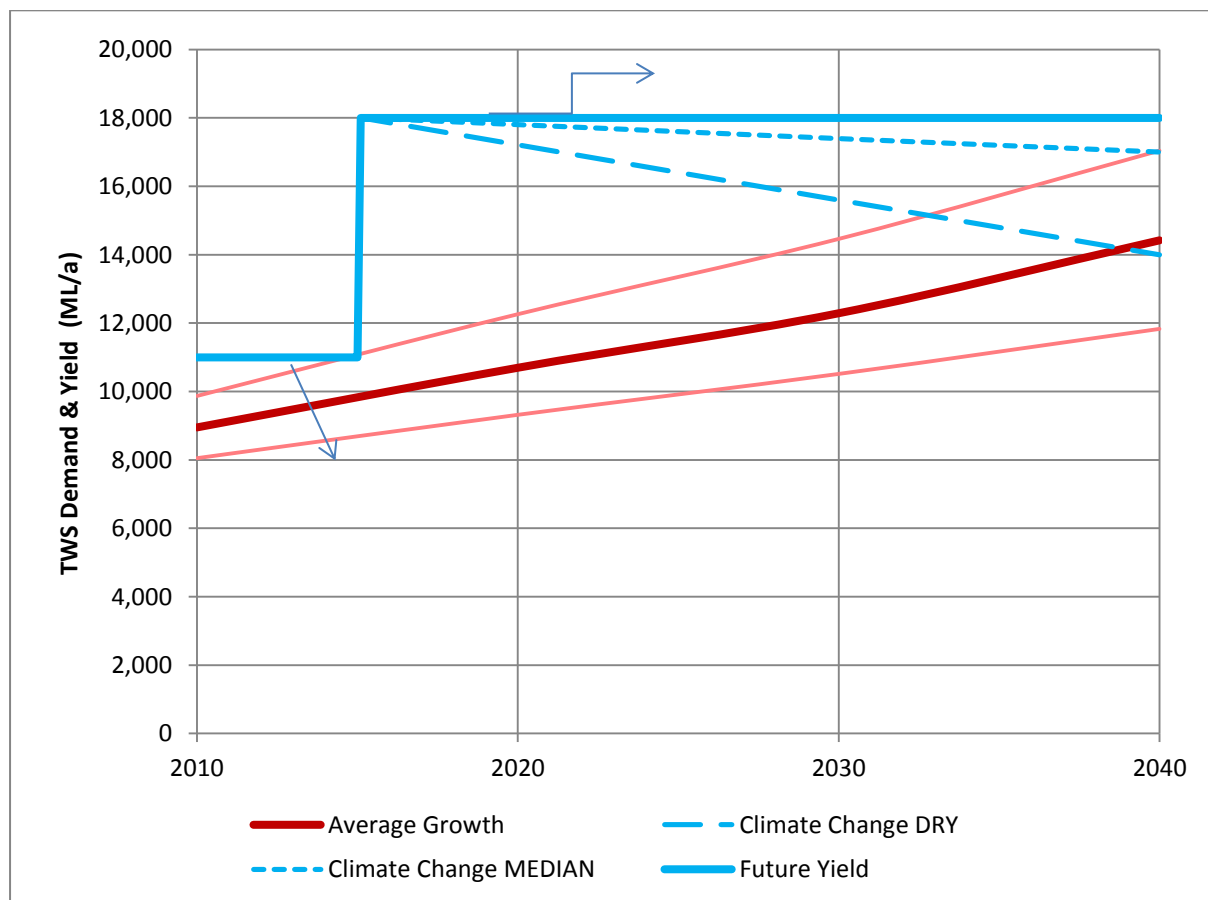
### Why don't you use odds and evens for water restrictions?

A test of odds and evens conducted prior to 2007 showed water consumption actually increased using this system. It is thought the reason for this increase was due to residents watering on their allotted day whether or not their garden needed to be watered. Council also received complaints from residents of even number properties about how residents of odd numbered properties had more opportunity to water given some months had 31 days.

Applying restrictions equally to all residents has shown a consistent decrease in consumption across all treated water users, regardless of the restriction level.

### Why allow more houses and businesses when we have restrictions?

Modelling of Tamworth's water supply and allowing for growth in both residential (due to population growth) and commercial consumption, has shown that with the augmented Chaffey Dam - increasing its storage capacity from 62 gigalitres to 102 gigalitres - there will be sufficient water to meet Tamworth's demand for the next 20-30 years. See graph below.



This does not mean there will be no restrictions ever, but that during times of low supply, the restrictions implemented should ensure that we do not run out of water during prolonged dry periods.

Restrictions help to ensure we all have the water we need - even in times of drought.

### **Why do you let business and industry start up here and use our water?**

Business and industry setting up or continuing to operate in the Tamworth region means jobs and economic growth. Fortunately water storage levels have never dropped to the point where Council has had to restrict business, industrial or commercial water usage. Modelling of Tamworth's existing water supplies has shown that with the augmentation of Chaffey Dam to increase its storage capacity from 62 gigalitres to 100 gigalitres there will be sufficient water to meet Tamworth's demand for the next 20-30 years, including allowances for growth.

### **Why don't you restrict business water use?**

Business, industry and commercial operations are the last water users to be restricted under Council's Drought Management Plan. Restricting water usage for business and industry has the potential to reduce production or operations which leads to a reduction in jobs.

During periods of low water supply the Drought Management Plan begins by restricting water for non-essential activities like maintaining green lawns or topping up swimming pools in order to conserve water for business and industry and indoor residential use. If water supplies become too low, business and industry is then restricted and water is conserved for critical human needs such as drinking, cleaning and cooking.

Council has previously conducted water usage audits on businesses by using independent water operations consultants to provide advice on how these businesses could improve water efficiencies in their operations. Many have successful water sustainability initiatives in place.

Fortunately, water restrictions have not reached the critical levels where Council has had to restrict business, industrial or commercial water usage.

### **Will Council reimburse me for my dead lawn or garden?**

No. Gardens in the Tamworth region should be designed or maintained knowing that Tamworth has a variable climate, meaning that amounts of rainfall we receive can change over long cycles. Residents' expectations of access to town water supplies to maintain gardens should be connected directly to this climate variability.

Council also strongly urges residents to be self-sufficient as much as possible when it comes to outside water usage by installing rainwater tanks that can be used to service plants or smaller areas of lawn. For more information, [click here](#).

### **Who takes water from Chaffey Dam?**

Chaffey Dam is owned and operated by the State government which provides water from the Dam for town water supplies, environmental flows, stock and domestic requirements for properties fronting the river, irrigated agriculture, industry, and some flood mitigation. The dam provides water supplies and drought security to the city of Tamworth and significant irrigation along the Peel Valley, including supplies used for the production of cotton, wheat, lucerne, vegetables, fruit trees, oil seeds and fodder as well as pastures for sheep and cattle. In 2018 there are 192 licences with a 48,292 Megalitre entitlements along 590km of river. These entitlements are broken up into:

- general security entitlements 30,468 megalitres
- high security/industry entitlements 973 megalitres
- stock and domestic requirements 177 megalitres
- town water supplies 16,400 megalitres (Tamworth)

Water users hold access licences to access their entitlement.

### **How is the water allocated out of Chaffey Dam?**

The State Government monitors the volume of water in Chaffey Dam. Each year, in about March April the Government looks at how much water is in the dam, and how much is likely to flow into the dam, based on historical records

Water stored in the dam is then allocated base don its security level – with water for town water supplies allocated first, then high security entitlement holders. If there is any water still left in the storage after these entitlements have been allocated then the Government makes an Available Water Determination (AWD) which dictates how much of their entitlement a general security license holder will be able to access in the upcoming water year (1 July to 30 June).

For example when the dam is full general security entitlement holders may receive an AWD of 100%, but during drought this figure can be reduced to any level even 0%. So that farmers, irrigators and other general security entitlement holders have some certainty around how much water they will get in a particular water year the AWD, once announced, can be increased throughout a water year but it cannot be reduced.

### **Does Council own, operate and manage Dungowan Dam?**

Yes. Council does own and operate and have exclusive access to the water in Dungowan Dam. However, Dungowan is a comparatively small dam when compared to other dams across the wider area. By way of comparison these dams have the following volumes:

- Keepit - 424 gicalitres
- Split Rock – 397 gicalitres
- Chaffey – 102 gicalitres
- Dungowan – 6 gicalitres

### **What is council doing to reduce the amount of treated water it uses?**

Council has been actively pursuing opportunities to reduce the amount of treated water it uses. Works completed include:

- Bicentennial Park including No. 1 Oval and Tamworth Regional Playground is now watered using ground or bore water,
- Likewise, almost all the sporting fields in the Riverside precinct and the Gipps Street Playing Fields are now watered using groundwater,
- Viaduct Park at North Tamworth and the park at Redbank Calala are also irrigated with groundwater,
- All Council buildings have had their water use assessed and where possible installations have been upgraded (such as sensor taps in bathrooms) to reduce water consumption,
- All the green space at the Northern Inland Centres of Sporting Excellence, including the Australian Equestrian and Livestock Events Centre, Tamworth Sports Dome and Tamworth Hockey Centre are irrigated using recycled water. The water used is generated as part of the treatment process at the Calala Water Treatment Plant, before being recycled for use in irrigation.

### **Why don't you explore other options for capturing water?**

Whilst we have enough water for Tamworth requirements, including growth for the next 20-30 years we are already looking at where additional water will come from post 2040.

A range of options have been looked at by a water engineering consultant and Council has decided to do further detailed investigation of the following four options:

- Transferring water from Keepit Dam via a 62km pipeline
- Upgrading Dungowan Dam from 6 gigalitres to between 20-25 gigalitres
- A 10-15 gigalitre off-river storage upstream of Tamworth
- Accessing more ground (bore) water through further use of Peel River Drift Wells and an additional bore field to be developed 26km downstream of Tamworth.

Council will continue to work with both the Australian and State Governments and private enterprise to further investigate these options so that Tamworth's future water supply is assured.