

Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel (CWAP)

The Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel held its first meeting on 27 February 2020.

The Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel has been established in response to extended dry conditions in the Hunter river system. A summary of the meeting outcomes is provided below.

Further information on the function and membership of critical water advisory panels can be found in the [fact sheet](#).

The Hunter is currently in drought Stage 1 - Normal Operations according to the NSW Extreme Events Policy but in the coming months is likely to move into Stage 2 - Emerging Drought if conditions do not improve.

The Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel is being established early to assist the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to manage the river system in close consultation with NSW government agencies and local councils if conditions worsen.

Hunter water availability update

While Hunter Water Corporation's storages have increased to an average of 63%, the combined capacity of the Hunter Valley rural storages operated by WaterNSW is 40%. Recent rain has nearly refilled the small Lostock Dam, but there has been no significant runoff in the catchments of Glenbawn and Glennies Creek dams. These dams are large, but have relatively small catchments and rely on major floods to fill. Consequently, they need to be managed through long periods of low inflows.

The Hunter has a diverse range of industries, many relying on high security entitlements. These include towns of significant size, major power stations, mining operations and intensive agriculture.

Large volumes need to be set aside in the storages to meet high priority needs.

To ensure supply for high security entitlements, general security allocations may be very low or zero at the commencement of the 2020-21 water year (1 July 2020), if conditions do not improve.

Regional Water Strategies

The department has prepared the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy which identifies long-term actions for water management in the region under a range of conditions, including drought.

Business cases are currently being developed for the following infrastructure options identified in the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy:

- a two-way pipeline between Lostock and Glennies Creek dams
- a potable pipeline from Hunter Water Corporation infrastructure to Singleton.

Drought planning

The department will work with the Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel to develop a drought contingency guide for the Hunter. This will be modelled on the incident response guides developed for each regulated river system in the Murray-Darling Basin which outline the range of tools available at each drought stage to manage water shortages.

Agencies present

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
 - Water Division
 - Environment, Energy and Science Division
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
 - DPI Agriculture
 - DPI Fisheries
 - DPI Engagement and Industry Assistance
- NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Local Land Services
- WaterNSW
- Singleton Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Hunter Water