



Gladys Berejiklian

Premier of NSW

Niall Blair

Minister for Primary Industries

MEDIA RELEASE

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DROUGHT RELIEF: MORE REGIONAL COMMUNITIES TO BENEFIT FROM WATER SECURITY PROJECTS

Regional communities will be able to build new and upgraded water infrastructure faster than ever as the NSW Government scraps red tape for its \$1 billion Safe and Secure Water program – an additional measure to support our farmers on top of the existing \$1 billion in drought relief measures.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced the latest tranche of the NSW Government's drought relief measures aimed at getting help to rural communities as fast as possible.

"We have stood with our farmers every step of the way – we are delivering more than \$1 billion in drought relief measures and now we are taking it up yet another step to ensure our regional communities have a safe and secure water supply," Ms Berejiklian said.

"Our focus now is on future-proofing the state – not just farmers but also the regional communities that rely on them. We want to see our farmers through this drought, we want to see them through recovery but we also want to make sure we have the best infrastructure in place to prepare communities for future droughts."

The NSW Government's Safe and Secure Water Program ensures regional NSW communities have access to high-quality, reliable and affordable water that meets modern environmental and health standards.

Many regional NSW communities face ongoing water security and quality challenges, particularly in times of drought, or have outdated wastewater treatment systems.

The Safe and Secure Water Program gives these communities access to funding to ensure the right water infrastructure in place for their future. The NSW Government has already invested \$500 million from this program to secure Broken Hill's long-term water supply through the Wentworth to Broken Hill Pipeline with the remaining \$500 million to be dedicated to water security projects being fast-tracked under today's announcement.

Under today's announcement, the program will be enhanced by slashing red tape, getting rid of onerous application processes and by prioritising the highest risk areas first.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Water Niall Blair said this will make it easier for all regional communities to access funding for critical water infrastructure projects.

“This program will now ensure that smaller regional communities, where the financial impact of major infrastructure investment is often challenging, is provided with the support that meets today’s standards,” Mr Blair said.

“Every community deserves access to reliable and high quality water and this program ensures that communities can reach their full potential. We are cutting red tape and streamlining the approvals process for this funding so that Councils have access to funding for critical water infrastructure when they need it.”

“No matter where you are from, whether it’s Coonabarabran or Murrurundi or Tamworth and Moree, the NSW Government is standing by your community and is ready to support its future growth,” Mr Blair said.

Under the updated program:

- The NSW Government will work with each local council on their infrastructure needs, rather than requiring them to go through an expensive and time consuming application process;
- 10 new engineers and 6 new infrastructure, planning and water security specialists will be deployed to help local councils to develop water security projects;
- Projects will no longer need to meet a rigid cost benefit ratio requirement as part of the assessment process; and
- Program funding will be prioritised to address the highest risks first, ensuring communities receive the infrastructure they need.

Today’s announcement builds on NSW’s strong record on supporting regional communities through the drought, which is affecting 99.2 per cent of the State.

The NSW Government has announced more than \$1 billion in drought support, including drought transport subsidies, the Farm Innovation Fund and the waiving of various farming fees and charges. These measures include:

- \$190 million in transport subsidies (4200 applications so far)
- \$101 million in cost of living measures (including LLS rates, fixed water charges, class 1A ag vehicles)
- Farm Innovation Fund - \$272 million committed (out of \$650 million)
- \$20 million Utilities and Roads
- \$10 million health and resilience support
- \$4 million animal welfare assistance
- \$5.6 million environmental water support

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