

Emergency relief for securing regional water supplies Policy

Background

In New South Wales, Councils and Local Water Utilities, Water Supply Authorities, Joint Organisations and town water supply organisations 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 water supplies are threatened by circumstances that could not be reasonably planned for, such as an extreme dry or wet period or extreme water quality event, the NSW Government can work with these organisations to ensure critical human water needs are met.

The Local Water Utilities branch within the Department provides technical assistance and advice to support them through the emergency and identify opportunities for financial assistance from the government.

This document describes the types of assistance available and the process that eligible organisations should follow when seeking support.

The NSW Government has also established NSW Drought Hub (see www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climateand-emergencies/drougthub), 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.

Eligible Organisations

- Local councils and County Councils, as identified under the Local Government Act 1993 (providing water supply and/or sewerage services under Section 56).
- Water supply authorities (as identified in the Water Management Act 2000).
- Joint organisations (as defined by the Office of Local Government).
- Town water suppliers in unincorporated areas.

Types of assistance available

There are two types of emergency water grant assistance available.

1. Emergency financial grant assistance

Where water cartage is agreed as the most cost-effective means of maintaining essential supplies, the department may pay a subsidy based on eligible costs incurred.

Financial assistance can also be provided for the emergency provision of bottled water in exceptional circumstances.

2. Emergency infrastructure grant assistance

The Department may offer to provide funding support for the cost of design and construction of approved water emergency works where the source of supply is at very high or imminent risk of failure or has failed as the result of an extreme event, and emergency capital works are agreed as the most cost-effective means of maintaining essential supplies. Works can include:

- constructing emergency bore supplies, creating an emergency connection to another water source or water supply scheme, developing new emergency water sources or other temporary emergency capital works
- installation of high-flow standpipes to provide potable water filling points for water carters and domestic water for rural customers.

Assistance for emergency capital works will generally be for the minimum required to ensure continuation of supply for critical human needs during the emergency.

How to apply for assistance

For urgent approvals to access funding for an emergency event where critical human needs are at immediate risk, an email exchange may be sufficient to initiate the emergency response. Eligible organisations that require water emergency assistance must also complete an online Expression of Interest (EOI) application form. Applicants will be notified by the department within 7 business days and invited to submit a detailed proposal application for assessment.

To be considered for financial assistance, a grant funding proposal must sufficiently detail:

- how the emergency event has or is likely to impact their community
- how the activities/scope of works the local water utilities proposes to undertake will address the impact of the emergency event and
- provide sufficient detail including an emergency plan and the proposed project budget for the department to assess value for money.

The emergency plan, including the proposed project budget, must be submitted with both infrastructure and financial (water carting or other) funding proposals.

For longer-term infrastructure solutions, financial assistance may be available under other grant programs, detailed on the [NSW Grants and Funding](#) website.

How to prepare an Emergency Plan

The eligible organisation should prepare an emergency plan such as a water carting plan (or equivalent) that includes:

- the name of the community/region and its location relative to the nearest town;
- a contingency plan for the current drought or water emergency (drought/emergency management plan); an indication of the earliest date supply 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 estimated 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

An emergency plan will enable an eligible organisation to consider and prepare an appropriate response. It will also provide the information required to support an application for assistance with emergency water cartage through an Emergency Financial Grant.

Emergency Financial Grant Assistance

The grant will only apply to essential domestic, commercial, industrial and institutional purposes in urban areas, or to essential domestic purposes in non-urban areas. The basis of subsidy for water cartage will be the actual cost of cartage, subject to Council targeting minimum essential quantities and implementing a high level of water restrictions that prohibits outdoor usage.

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

Water Carting to non-urban residents

Water carting may be considered for eligible organisations to support NSW regional non-urban residents for domestic purposes in exceptional circumstances only where there is a public health concern.

Eligible organisations may seek grant funding to support water carting to non-urban residents in specific emergency events, where affected residents cannot access safe water from their usual water supply. The duration of the grant is time-limited to address the current water emergency affecting those residents where no other viable option to access water exists.

Emergency Financial Grant application

Where water carting is agreed as the cost-effective means of maintaining essential supplies of water, the eligible organisation should apply for an emergency financial grant. The application for funding is to be submitted through the EOI form, and then a detailed proposal.

The application should include:

- 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 likely cost of purchase and transportation of water
- copies of all correspondence with transport contracts regarding cartage, where available.

When 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) eligible costs may include supply, freight and distribution costs.

The amount of funding assistance available for water carting or bottled water will be limited to 90% of eligible costs, unless financial hardship can be demonstrated.

The eligible organisation is responsible for town water services and is responsible for meeting all costs not covered by the grant including supporting activities or management costs. All grant funding support will be paid in arrears once the grantee has provided sufficient evidence to the department of the actual costs incurred, e.g. invoices, receipts and remittance advices.

Determining minimum essential water requirements

Emergency or water carting plans should be developed to estimate the minimum essential water requirements of the affected community. For eligible organisations developing a water carting plan, the following quantities are recommended AS A GUIDE to assist planning.

Residences

All quantities are given in litres per person per day.

Area/supply type	WC not connected to septic tank	Septic tank	Sewered
Coast and Tablelands:			
Unreticulated supply	60	75	
Reticulated supply	65	80	95
Western Areas:			
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 affected scheme being assessed on the 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 or organisation, 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).

Bottled Water

For exceptional circumstances where it has been agreed that the provision of bottled water is required, the maximum eligible quantities are given below in litres per person per day.

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

The subsidy for bottled water will apply to the actual cost incurred to supply the domestic population, depending on the circumstance and health advice, with quantities up to these amounts.

Emergency Infrastructure Grants

If emergency capital works are identified as the most cost-effective means of maintaining essential supplies of water, the eligible organisation should apply for an emergency infrastructure grant. The application for funding is to be submitted through the EOI form, and then a detailed proposal.

The proposal 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

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 or the eligible organisation.

The amount of funding assistance available for emergency capital works will usually be limited to a percentage based on the department’s grants program subsidy band limits (or equivalent based on population serviced for town water supply authorities in unincorporated areas), unless financial hardship can be demonstrated.

The amount of funding assistance available for standpipes will not exceed \$25,000 per high-flow standpipe.

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