

Frequently asked questions

Drought readiness

March 2019



What is drought readiness?

The drought readiness phase starts when the combined levels of our drinking water dams reach 70%. This phase is about getting ready for the possibility of drought and encouraging South East Queenslanders to be more water wise. It doesn't mean drought is inevitable, but prepares the region for the possibility.

While there is no need for conservation measures or water restrictions at this level, there are some simple things we can do to be more water efficient around the home, school and work.

What does the drought readiness phase involve?

One of the key lessons from the Millennium Drought was the importance of engaging with the community early when continued dry conditions indicated the possibility of future drought.

The Millennium Drought showed our community's willingness to play their part in helping to conserve our drinking water early.

Taking this into account, Seqwater amended its South East Queensland Drought Response Plan in March 2017 which includes a drought readiness phase designed to better prepare the region for the prospect of drought.

What should I be doing during the drought readiness phase?

Until a drought response is triggered (when our drinking water dams combined level reaches 60%) we encourage you to:

- Monitor your water use so you understand how you use water and where savings can be made
- Use water efficiently - check out our water wise tips at seqwater.com.au
- Stay in touch with us on our website and/or social media to understand the dam levels and what this means for your water use.

When are water restrictions likely to be introduced?

The South East Queensland Drought Response Plan introduces mandatory region-wide water restrictions when the combined level of our drinking water dams reach 50% capacity.

With the availability of the water grid, the earliest region-wide water restrictions would be required, as of February 2019, is April 2020.

If mandatory water restrictions are introduced at 50%, they will be in place across the entire South East Queensland region and ask residents to target 140 litres of water per person per day.

Will you close or restrict recreation at lakes if water levels continue to drop?

Seqwater endeavours to keep recreation open at its recreational lakes, however if water levels drop to a point that recreation activities become unsafe, restrictions and subsequent closures may be required.

This is consistent with our approach across all our recreation lakes to best ensure the safety of the public.

We appreciate any closure impacts on recreation users, especially during the summer and holidays but Seqwater has a duty of care to close recreation if public safety is at risk.

If areas are closed or restricted, we will seek to re-open as soon as it is safe to do so. Seqwater informs and updates local stakeholders of potential closures before they take place.

What is Seqwater doing to make sure we don't run out of water?

Seqwater is responsible for water security in South East Queensland and in line with its legislative responsibility has developed and amended its Water Security Program – a long term plan to manage water security across the region.

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This Program includes triggers for activating drought response and actions that aim to manage the water supply and demand to ensure that the region does not run out of water.

The biggest single change since the Millennium Drought has been the construction of the Water Grid which allows Seqwater to move treated drinking water around the region.

The connected water treatment plants and pipelines across the Water Grid, and the availability of the Gold Coast Desalination Plant and the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme to respond to drought, means the region has more resources at its disposal to manage drought than ever before.

Can I top up my rainwater tank with town water?

You are currently allowed to use town water to water your garden, top up your pool and for all other outdoor water use activities.

Currently there are no water restrictions on these uses, but you are encouraged to remain efficient in your water use and monitor your consumption to ensure you are aware of increases in your use. It is also a good idea to make sure your rainwater tank is available to capture any rain that does fall.

Water saving tips include: keeping the pool cover on when the pool is not in use, washing your car on the lawn using a trigger action hose nozzle on the hose or a high pressure water cleaner, or avoiding watering the garden in the heat of the day (avoid 10am – 4pm), and using water saving mulch to reduce water lost to evaporation.

Why are we being asked to conserve water after significant investment in desalination and purified recycled water?

The Water Grid and the availability of climate-resilient water sources like the Gold Coast Desalination Plant and the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme has provided us with the means to better manage drought conditions. However this infrastructure only mitigates the effects of drought - it does not prevent severe drought.

Seasonal rainfall is still important because it replenishes surface water in dams, which account for most of South East Queensland's water supply. It is important to remember that in South East Queensland, we live in a climate of extremes and need to be ready to adjust our water use.

We are one region with one water supply. Everyone needs to be water efficient, even when parts of our region experience drier conditions than other areas.

By better managing our water supply we can help delay and even potentially avoid the need for mandatory water restrictions. We understand water restrictions impact our lifestyle and economy, so being water efficient whenever we can, will help delay restrictions.

When will industry be asked to save water?

Many businesses have retained their water efficiency since the Millennium Drought and will continue to do so over the years to come.

At 60% water conservation and business and industry voluntary programs will be made available containing information for businesses to conduct their own audit of your to investigate further water efficiencies in their businesses.

When the water grid level hits 25% mandatory restrictions targeting outdoor water use will be introduced.

Seqwater will work with peak industry bodies to encourage appropriate water efficiencies for that industry type.

About us

Seqwater is the Queensland Government statutory authority responsible for providing a safe, secure cost-effective bulk water supply for 3.2 million people across South East Queensland. We also provide irrigation water to 1,200 rural customers, as well as essential flood mitigation services, and a range of recreation facilities at our dams, lakes and parks.

Find out more

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