

Tuesday, 18 June 2019

MAKING EVERY DROP COUNT DURING THE DRY

Water security for drought-stricken communities remains a major focus of the 2019-20 NSW Budget with the Government working with communities on regional solutions for the safe and secure supply of water.

Minister for Water, Property and Housing Melinda Pavey said funding water infrastructure was an investment in the future of our regions.

“Supporting NSW through this drought is our priority and is why the Government is investing in major water infrastructure projects such as the Broken Hill Pipeline and 79 other Safe and Secure water security projects across the State,” Mrs Pavey said.

“Our communities need to be confident that their government will put them first.”

An additional \$5.1m has been allocated to the Natural Resource Access Regulator (NRAR) to ensure fair management of water across the state. In its first 12 months, the NRAR has increased compliance activity by 80 percent and doubled its on-the-ground compliance staff.

“We need to build trust in the system while supporting irrigation communities – catching those who have done the wrong thing and recognising those doing the right thing,” Mrs Pavey said.

The NSW Government is also investing in a drought package which includes \$30 million for rebates of fixed charges on water licences that don't receive a water allocation. This will encompass areas in the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Gwydir, Lachlan, Lower Darling, Barwon Darling, Namoi, Macquarie, Boarder Rivers, Peel River and Belubula.

A further \$500,000 is allocated to work with water-dependent industries, such as mines and abattoirs, to help them become more water efficient and keep them operating during this drought.

“In many of these towns, it is these industries that are supporting the local economy through the drought. It is important that we support these industries so that they can continue to support their towns.”

The 2019-20 Budget will also support landowners by allocating \$13 million over four years for water efficiency and prevent water loss in the Great Artesian Basin.

This continues a 20-year investment in efficient infrastructure, which has removed 10,000km of bore drains and installed 18,000km of pipes to save 76 gigalitres per year across more than 4.2 million hectares.

This NSW Government has already invested \$1 billion into the Safe and Secure Fund, designed to regional towns plan and respond to water needs.

The NSW drought infrastructure package which totalled \$170 million also included \$44.44 million to address water security in Dubbo, Coonabarabran, Nyngan, Cobar, through the Macquarie Valley and surrounding catchments, \$15 million for emergency water carting and related work to secure town and household water supplies.

Up to \$10 million has been allocated to improve the quality of drinking water in towns such as Walgett and Bourke through improved water infrastructure. This is in addition to the \$11.2 million investment made during this drought for emergency relief in around 20 NSW communities.

The NSW Government is continuing its work with the Murray Darling Basin Plan and this year will deliver more Water Resources Plans than any other Basin state.

The Budget includes \$97.8 million in funding over three years (including \$30.8 million in 2019-20) to deliver Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Projects, which are a critical piece of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

“We will work with the lower Darling communities including Pooncarie and Menindee to ensure social environmental and economic considerations are at the forefront of decision making,” Mrs Pavey said.

The 2019-20 Budget also provides \$12.5 million to develop and implement regional water strategies, which will identify and prioritise future infrastructure funding to deliver water security to regional communities.

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