



With continued dry weather and drought conditions Singleton and the surrounding region enter Level 2 Water Restrictions from 1 March 2020. Water restrictions apply to all water users who use drinking water sourced from Singleton Council, including residents, business and government. Below you'll find the answers to our most Frequently Asked Questions.

When did Singleton Council water supply area go onto water restrictions?

Council moved to:

- Level 2 Water Restrictions on 1 March 2020
- Level 1 Water Restrictions on 26 June 2019

Permanent water wise rules were adopted as part of POL/26030 Water Supply Services Policy 19 March 2018.

How do I know where my water comes from?

Two water utilities provide water services within the Singleton Local Government Area; Singleton Council, which provides water services to Singleton, Jerrys Plains, Mount Thorley and Broke, and Hunter Water, which provides water services to Branxton.

Check your water bill if you are not sure which water utility provides your water.

Why are water restrictions needed?

When the Singleton region experiences an extended dry period and the long term forecast indicates a lower than normal prediction of rainfall, Council has a duty to follow its adopted Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan to ensure sufficient water is available to meet critical human needs. In accordance with that plan and current drought conditions it is necessary to implement restrictions to ensure long term water security.

How long will water restrictions remain in place?

Water restrictions will be lifted when:

- The long term forecast for rain is considered positive,
- Council resolves to lift the current voluntary restrictions, and/or
- Any reductions in high security water allocations, the trigger point set out in Council's Drought management and Emergency Response Plan have been reinstated.

How much rain would we need to see water restrictions lifted?

When Glennies Creek Dam was built in the early 1980s, it took 3 years of normal seasonal rainfall to fill its 283,000 megalitre capacity. The rainfall currently being experienced in the catchment is at historically low levels, and while the region has experienced isolated rainfall in early February, the effects on the dam levels have been minor.

With increased demand for water from agriculture, industry, towns and environmental flows to the Hunter River and wetlands, water restrictions and the way we use water will become a part of everyday life for the foreseeable future.

Information on dam and rainfall levels can be found on [WaterNSW website](#).

Why don't we build more dams?

Traditionally, dams have been used as catchments for rainfall to supply water across the Hunter, but as we get less and less rain, our dams are experiencing less and less inflow. Developing new water sources alone isn't enough though, the whole community (residents and businesses) need to work to reduce our water uses and be water efficient whenever and wherever possible.

While dams will continue to play an important part in our water supply, they aren't a secure solution and developing water sources that aren't dependant on rainfall should be a priority

I'm confused by all the terminology about types of water, please explain.

Potable water – drinking water and water used for food preparation (also referred to as town water).

Non-potable – water that is not of drinking quality, but still may be used for many other purposes, depending on its quality. Also known as 'raw water' or 'untreated water'

Groundwater – water that is present beneath Earth's surface in soil pore spaces and in the fractures of rock formations.

Surface water – water on the surface of the Earth such as rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands.

Greywater – the waste water generated from households or office buildings from showers, baths, spas, hand basins, laundry tubs and washing machines.

Dark greywater – water from dishwashers and kitchen sinks (which have higher levels of chemicals, fats and other organic matter).

Black water – water from toilets.

Recycled water – reclaimed or recycled water is the process of converting wastewater into water that can be reused for other purposes. Reuse may include irrigation of gardens and agricultural fields or replenishing surface water and groundwater.

Bore water – water that has accumulated over time in underground aquifers (water storages). A bore is drilled down into the aquifer and water is pumped to the surface for irrigation, town water supply (following additional processing), crops, stock water etc. Also known as 'groundwater'.



BORE WATER

If I use bore water or water extracted from rivers, do Level 2 water restrictions apply?

Water that is supplied from bores and rivers is not regulated by Singleton Council and is therefore not impacted by water restrictions. Water allocations for these sources are managed by the Department of Planning Industry and Investment - Water.

While Singleton Council's water restrictions don't apply to bore or river water you do need approval from WaterNSW to extract groundwater and surface water.

How do I report someone using bore and river water who I think is breaking the rules?

Contact the Natural Resource Regulator (NRAR) if you believe a WaterNSW/NRAR licenced water user was using water illegally.

Are water users licenced by WaterNSW allowed to use their at any time of the day?

Water users using water licensed by WaterNSW are not subject to Singleton Council's water restrictions and are not restricted to using it only at certain times of the day.

However, this does not mean that water usage by licenced water users is unrestricted. WaterNSW and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment restricts water volume in times of drought. In severe drought, there are many farmers and other users that have no water allocation available to them.

BREACHES – REPORTING AND PENALTIES

What happens to those who don't do the right thing?

Council's [Water Restrictions Enforcement Policy](#) outlines how Council will enforce the water restrictions. The steps are:

1. Restricted breach is reported
2. Issue water restrictions information flyer to the offending property occupant
3. Issue warning letter accompanied by water restrictions information flyer to the offending property occupant
4. Issue penalty infringement notice (PIN) accompanied by water restrictions information flyer to the offending property occupant
5. Restrict water supply through installation of an orifice plate at the meter of the offending property
6. PIN, court order and/or prosecution of the offending property occupant.

How do you police water restriction compliance?

The tools Council uses to monitor compliance and detect breaches of water restrictions include:

- Council compliance staff undertaking patrols;
- Spot checks without warning;
- Specific inspections;
- Water consumption data



- Notified site inspections;
- Community feedback and reports; and
- Investigations and reports from other agencies or regulatory authorities.

All reports of breaches are taken seriously and investigated to obtain the necessary evidence to support action. The quality of the information you provide when reporting will make it easier to act on the suspected breach. To ensure we are able to act we ask that you provide the following information at a minimum:

- Address of alleged breach
- Time of alleged breach
- Banned activity

What legislation allows Council to police water restrictions?

Section 637 of the *Local Government Act, 1993 (NSW)* permits Council to apply a penalty to a person who wilfully or negligently wastes or misuses water from a public water supply. This section of the act gives Council various powers to enforce waste or misuse of water, including water restrictions.

How much is the fine for breaching water restrictions?

Section 637 of the *Local Government Act, 1993 (NSW)* sets the maximum penalty for a person who wilfully or negligently wastes or misuses water from a public water supply or causes any such water to be wasted at 20 penalty units.

At the date of the [Water Restrictions Enforcement Policy](#), one penalty unit is equivalent to **\$110**, meaning all penalties issued are up to **\$2,200**.

Under s637 of the Local Government Act, 1993 (NSW) and schedule 12 of the Local Government (General) Regulation, 2005 (NSW), Council is able to issue a penalty infringement notice (PIN). This 'on the spot' fine is currently set at **\$220**.

What do I do if I see someone breaking the rules?

If you know the person, have a reasonable conversation with them and let them know water restrictions apply, and they are breaching the restricted activities.

If you are uncomfortable talking to the person breaking the rules, you can make a report you can report it:

- online via our Online Services, you will need to log in or create an account to do this,
- email council@singleton.nsw.gov.au, or
- call one of our friendly Customer Service Officers, who will make the report on your behalf.

To report online, register or sign in and navigate to **Requests Centre > Report It > Report Water Restrictions Breach**. Providing evidence, such as date and time stamped photos and specific details of the breach (address, activity, times, dates, description etc), as well as leaving



your name and contact details. This helps Council officer to investigate breaches and follow up with you if any additional information is needed.

Your information is protected in accordance with Council's [Privacy Statement](#) and will only be used to notify the outcome of your report or clarify any details.

As a landlord, can I be held responsible for an infringement should a tenant fail to comply with Level 1 water restrictions?

The intention is to provide notices to the occupier of the property.

If you receive a notice as a landlord and do not reside at the property where the offence took place, you simply complete a Statutory Declaration and send it to the State Debt Recovery Office providing details of the agreement including the name of the person who leases the property.

EXEMPTIONS

Are there any exemptions?

General exemptions include using water for public health, safety and environmental issues. For example to prevent or in the event of an accident or health hazard, you can use a high pressure cleaner to remove an oil spill on a driveway, hose pavers around a swimming pool that have become slippery from salt build up and you can always use water to defend property from fire or test fire protection systems. Water can also be used for people and pets in heat stress.

Can I apply for a special variation or exemption?

Council understands there are times water usage is required outside the designated hours or purposes, or the conditions of restrictions cannot be reasonably met. In these instances, you may apply for a Water Restriction Special Exemption or Variation.

There are two types of variations applicable to water restrictions:

- **Special Exemption** - available for one off activities over a short time period; for example pressure cleaning a driveway for repairs and maintenance.
- **Special Variation** - available for the duration of the water restriction level applicable to the approval; for example an aged pensioner may apply for a special variation to watering times or days based on when carers are available.

HUNTER WATER DIFFERENCES

Why are Hunter Water and Singleton Council's water restrictions different?

Hunter Water's drought management response is governed by the *Hunter Water Act 1991 (NSW)* and Singleton Council's drought management response is governed by the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* and the *NSW Best Practice Management for Water Supplies and Sewerage Guidelines (2007)*. As a result, Hunter Water has 3 levels of restrictions and Singleton Council has 6 levels of restrictions.



Additionally, both water utilities source water from distinctly different sources. Singleton Council sources its water from Glennies Creek Dam for Singleton, Mount Thorley and Broke and the Hunter River for Jerrys Plains. Hunter Water sources its water from Grahamstown Dam, Chichester Dam, Tomago Sandbeds, Anna Bay Sandbeds, the Paterson River and the Allyn River.

Why is Hunter Water on level 1 water restrictions and Singleton Council's on level 2?

Although Hunter Water has reduced their water restrictions to level 1 following rain in mid February 2020, Singleton has not been so lucky with Glennies Creek Dam only seeing a 1% increase.

Singleton Council's water restrictions apply to customers in Singleton, Mount Thorley, Broke and Jerrys Plains. Customers are encouraged to check their bill to confirm their water provider and applicable water restrictions.

WATERING GARDENS AND LAWNS

What are the summer and winter months?

Restriction levels for watering activities including gardens and lawns are subject to seasonal variations for summer and winter. For all restriction levels:

- **Summer** means the months of October, November, December, January, February, and March
- **Winter** means the months of April, May, June, July, August and September

How do I know which day I can water my garden and lawn with the odds and evens system?

The odds and evens system is based on the street number of the property and the numbered day of the month. If the property street number:

- is an odd number you can water in accordance with the restrictions on odd numbered days of the month
- is an even number you can water in accordance with the restrictions on even numbered days of the month
- has a range of numbers then it should be treated as the first number in the range, for example 12 to 15 Smith Street can water on even numbered days of the month, in accordance with the restrictions,
- has no street number, then it should be treated as an even property and you can water on even numbered days of the month, in accordance with the restrictions, and
- has two street numbers (e.g. corner blocks) then it should be treated as an even property. For example, if the property has the addresses 1 Smith Street and 1 John Street then water use, in accordance with restrictions, can occur on even days.

All properties can water in accordance with the restriction levels on 29 February and 31 of months with 31 days.

