

Fact sheet Dam Improvement Program



Delivering a safe, secure water supply

Dams supply our drinking water and they play a very important role in the SEQ Water Grid – making sure everyone in South East Queensland has water to live, work and play.

At Seqwater, some of the dams we operate were built decades ago and, just like cars, they need regular maintenance to keep them in good working order.

In Queensland, dam owners are responsible for the safety of their dams under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. Seqwater's Dam Improvement Program is about upgrading dams in line with the latest engineering standards and to meet the current Queensland Dam Safety Guidelines.

Dams are long-life assets and maintaining their ongoing safety is our responsibility. We have an extensive dam safety monitoring and assessment program across South East Queensland, which involves regular inspections, audits and assessments throughout the year.

Assessing our dams

In 2012-13, Seqwater commissioned an independent review of our 26 referable dams, which found improvements are needed at a number of our dams to meet Queensland Dam Safety Guidelines into the future.

Many of our dams were built in the 1960s and 1970s (some even earlier). Over the years there have been many changes which affect the way we manage the dams including:

- new ways of estimating extreme rainfall and flood events
- greater understanding of the size and severity of earthquakes
- significant development and population growth downstream of our dams
- advances in dam design and construction
- increased regulation for operating and maintaining dams to the highest environmental and safety standards.

All these factors are considered as part of Seqwater's Dam Improvement Program so our dams operate as they should, now and into the future.

Improving our dams

We have prioritised a program of dam upgrades in a staged approach to give us time to scope, design and plan, while maintaining public safety, security of water supply and delivering the best value for money.

Once a dam has been identified for upgrade, investigations and planning are needed to determine the scope, estimated cost and timing of work. Where possible, the water levels of dams may be lowered until upgrades can be done. Lowering the water level reduces the load on the dam and allows more air space for the dam to pass excess water safely.

Improving our dams is a rolling program. In recent years we have upgraded Lake Manchester and Borumba (2008), Hinze (2011), North Pine and Ewen Maddock - Stage 1 (2012), Maroon and Moogerah (2014), Wappa (2017) and Cooloolabin (2018). We also began upgrades at Leslie Harrison and Sideling Creek (Lake Kurwongbah) in 2018.

Every dam upgrade is different – some may take several months, while others take years to complete. Dams identified for investigation and potential upgrade include: Ewen Maddock - Stage 2, Six Mile Creek (Lake Macdonald), Bill Gunn and Somerset dams.

Queensland has a good dam safety record, but just like cars, dams need regular checks and maintenance to keep them in good working order. Dams are large-scale public infrastructure and though they have a very low probability of failure they have the potential to cause very high consequences.

The engineering and safety features of cars have improved over time and so too have those of dams. The Dam Improvement Program is about upgrading our dams in line with the latest engineering standards, while meeting the current Queensland Dam Safety Guidelines.

Keeping you informed

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