



CASE STUDY:

MAKING HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES

For more than two years residents across the Tamworth region lived through the worst drought on record, but now the seasons are changing and the rain has finally arrived.

During the two years of drought Council worked with residents and businesses across the region to ensure that there was enough water to meet critical human needs at all times. Residents were audacious in their water saving approach, many making light work of a tight 150L per person per day consumption target. Meanwhile businesses pivoted to reduce water use where they could while still delivering a top-notch operation that continued to contribute positively to our local economy.

In all dark situations there are silver linings and for the drought and Council it was the speed at which water security infrastructure was considered, approved and built across the region. The 120ML raw water storage dam at the Calala Water Treatment Plant, the temporary weir at Dungowan, the Chaffey Dam to Dungowan emergency pipeline, and the pipeline from the Manilla River to Namoi River are just some examples of this.

Whilst infrastructure helped minimise water losses and increased the lifespan of the available water supplies, it was Council's Drought Management Plan (DMP) that led the decision making in regards to when water restrictions should be implemented, increased and decreased. The purpose of the DMP is to ensure Council is able to fulfil its responsibility as the local water utility and continue to

provide potable water to its customers. In regards to this the DMP was hugely successful with all six water supplies managed by Council being able to meet demand throughout the drought.

In recent months weather patterns have changed and our region has welcomed downpours, recharging our rivers and inflows topping up our dams. This rain has seen all water supplies across the region return to Permanent Water Conservation Measures. This breathing room has allowed for us to reflect and consider what different actions can be taken next time.

This reflection and consideration has led to the review of the Drought Management Plan, Demand Management Plan, Emergency Water Supply Plan and Water Restrictions Communications and Engagement Plan. Moving forward it will be proposed that these four plans are encompassed under a Water Management Plan.

We are working to explore and understand how we can better manage the water supplies and allocations we have access to and how we can better implement water restrictions and targets for residents and business moving forward.

Our goal will always be to ensure we are able to supply our residents and businesses with potable water. These plans are the playbooks of how we can achieve our goal now and into the future.