



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is there a central source of information about the drought in the Dubbo Regional Local Government Area?

Yes, Dubbo Regional Council's Dubbo Drought Hub is your central online hub for information about the drought in the Dubbo Regional Local Government Area.

When did the Dubbo Region go onto water restrictions?

Dubbo Regional Council moved to:

- Level 2 water restrictions 1 June 2019
- Level 3 water restrictions 1 October 2019
- Level 4 water restrictions 1 November 2019

What is allowed under each level of water restrictions?

Residential – the residential water restrictions table (PDF 50KB) provides an overview of activities permitted under each level of water restrictions. Further information can be found on the Dubbo Drought Hub Residential Water Restrictions page.

Non-residential – the Non-residential/commercial water restrictions table (PDF 84.3KB) provides an overview of activities permitted under each level of water restrictions. Further information can be found on the Dubbo Drought Hub Non-residential Water Restrictions page.

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.
- **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).
- **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.

What is backwash water and how is it used in the Dubbo Region?

Backwash water is created in the production of potable (town) water for Dubbo City. Water is drawn from the Macquarie River and passes through filters that remove the larger particulates suspended in the water.

Over time the filters become clogged with these particulates and need to be cleaned. To achieve this, the flow of water from the Macquarie River is reversed and sent back through the filters dislodging the particulates. This resultant backwash water is then transferred to settling ponds to allow the particulates to settle out.

The resulting water can then be reused for irrigation purposes, evaporated off, released to the river (with approvals), or put back into the system for processing into potable water.

There are seven sites in Dubbo City which backwash water is connected to:

- Bennett's Park (0.8ha)
- Tidy Town Park (0.5ha)
- Wahroonga Park (1.2ha)
- Pavan's Land (currently under development – 6ha)
- Regand Park BBQ area (0.2ha)
- Lady Cutler South (6ha)

- Lady Cutler Oval (southern side only – 6ha)

RESIDENTS

Under Level 4 water restrictions, how much water can I use per day?

The daily target per person per day is 280 litres of water.

What's a typical break-down of 280 litres of water per person at home?

Level 4 water restrictions means you have to be resourceful in meeting your daily residential target of 280 litres per person. Check out a what a typical break-down of 280 litres looks like and let's all be wise with our water.

How do I calculate my daily water usage?

Step 1: Read your meter (e.g. 2,582,602L).

Step 2: Read your meter one week later (e.g. 2,584,612L).

Step 3: Subtract your first read from your second read (e.g. 2,584,612L – 2,582,602L).

Step 4: Divide the answer you found in Step 3 by the number of people in your household (e.g. based on 3 person family, 2,010L / 3 people = 670L p/person p/week).

Step 5: Find your daily consumption by dividing the answer you found in Step 4 by 7 (e.g. 670L / 7 = 96L p/person p/day).

For more information on how to read your water meter see the 'How can I keep track of my water usage' section on Council's Daily Water Usage page.

How long can I shower for?

Dubbo Regional Council encourages efficient water use when showering – aim to shower for five (5) minutes or less.

Can I use my evaporative air conditioner/cooler? Are there any restrictions?

Yes, evaporative air conditioners/coolers can be used at home and there are no restrictions on their use.

The new Level 4 water restrictions that came in to force across the Dubbo Regional LGA on 4 November 2019 saw an increase in the daily water limit (litres per person per day) from 245 litres to 280 litres. This accounts for a relaxation on internal water uses such as full use of evaporative air coolers, which many residential households require so as to not compromise the health, hygiene and safety of people.

When can I water my lawn and gardens?

Under the new Level 4 water restrictions, which came into effect on 4 November 2019, households can water outdoors as follows:

- A maximum of 30 minutes (total) on **Wednesdays** and a maximum of 30 minutes (total) on **Sundays**.
- Watering is to be **outside** the heat of the day – the heat of the day is defined as between 9:00am and 6:00pm (so you can choose to water for a maximum of 30 minutes either before 9:00am or after 6:00pm on the two watering days).
- Only one water outlet may be used at any one time. For instance, your irrigation system, or a hand held hose, or sprinkler etc. You cannot water from multiple outlets at the same time.

- For multi-station / multi-zone irrigation systems, the maximum 30 minutes is the total watering time permitted, it does not mean 30 minutes for each station / zone. For example, if your system has six (6) stations / zones around your property you may want to set each station / zone to five (5) minute for an even distribution of water.

Watering outdoors covers both lawns and gardens, so households now have the choice whether they water their garden or their lawn or a combination of both – up to the maximum 30 minutes (total) each watering day. There is also the choice not to water at all.

Why are lawns now allowed to be watered under Level 4 water restrictions?

It became apparent during the consultation undertaken during Dubbo Regional Council's review of water restrictions, which came into effect on 4 November 2019, that the majority of residential water use is external, that is outside the household – gardens, lawns, and other activities.

Therefore, the Level 4 water restrictions were amended to help reduce outdoor water use. In line with technical advice as part of Council's consultation, the restriction to 30-minute maximum watering outdoors two days per week is sufficient to allow lawns to brown off but not die.

How can I water my garden or lawn? What devices or systems are permitted?

The following methods are permitted under Level 4 water restrictions:

- Buckets and watering cans,
- Hand-held hoses fitted with an on/off trigger style nozzle,

- Fixed timing (programmable) water efficient drip and/or smart irrigation systems.
- Micro sprays or soaker hoses that are fitted with a timer.

Any watering system that ***does not*** have a timer ***MUST*** be attended at all times, otherwise it is ***not permitted***.

So, can I still water my garden or lawn with a soaker hose?

Yes, under Level 4 water restrictions devices such as micro sprays, soaker hoses and manual sprinklers are permitted to be used as long as they are fitted with a timer or the person watering is present/in attendance, that is, they are watching the hose/sprinkler to comply with the 30-minute maximum watering allocation.

Can I still water outdoors if I have a rainwater tank or bore?

Yes. The water restrictions are for the use of our potable water supply (town water). If the restrictions say 'Not permitted' for a particular use, this means that Council's potable water supply cannot be used for this purpose.

Rainwater tanks that are filled by Council's potable water supply are subject to the same water restrictions as town water). Water from another source (such as bore or rain water) can be used, however water is a finite resource and should be used wisely regardless of where it is sourced from.

Signage must be installed at premises identifying non-potable water is in use (such as recycled or bore water). Council will monitor and may conduct inspections and water quality testing to confirm the water source being used.

Can I still lay new turf around my house?

Under Level 4 water restrictions, watering is permitted for turf establishment – ***up to 50 square metres of new turf*** – with use of suitable ground preparation and soil wetting agents.

A new turf watering plan must be submitted and approved by Dubbo Regional Council using the New Turf Watering Plan Application Form. Further information on new turf is on the Dubbo Drought Hub Residential Water Restrictions page.

How do I keep my pool/spa running under water restrictions?

Under Level 4 water restrictions, the topping up of swimming pools is permitted, provided pool covers are used. Pool covers can help reduce evaporation by up to 90% and are a very effective way of reducing the amount of water needed to top up.

Council permission must be obtained for first fill of swimming pools or spas. To obtain approval, use the Application Form - First Fill of Swimming Pool/Spa and submit to Council.

Further information on swimming pools and spas can be found on the Dubbo Drought Hub Residential Water Restrictions page.

Can my child still play in an inflatable pool?

Yes under level 4 water restrictions inflatable and temporary pools are permitted. Don't forget pools with 30cm of water or more require fencing and Council approval is required for pools and spas over 2000L in capacity.

Can I access free water?

Dubbo Regional Council is proud to support Team Rubicon's initiative *Litres for the Land*, where more than six million litres of potable water will be donated and delivered to farmhouse tanks in the area.

The water, which is from Dubbo Regional Council's potable town water supply, can be used for everyday household use including showering, washing clothes, and cooking.

Farmers seeking support from Team Rubicon can register their interest by getting in touch with Team Rubicon directly by visiting teamrubiconaus.org or by calling: (02) 8815 8113.

Can I use greywater at home?

Yes, bucketing of greywater is permitted under every level of water restrictions.

Collecting greywater from laundries, sinks, and showers can hold harmful bacteria and high salt levels as well as other chemicals. With care, and in line with the NSW Guidelines for Greywater Reuse in Sewered, Single Household Residential Premises, greywater can be used on gardens and lawns.

A greywater diversion device whilst not encouraged is permissible if it complies with the NSW Greywater Guidelines (as above), including the requirement for subsurface irrigation only.

Can I still wash my pet under Level 4 water restrictions?

Yes, there should not be any compromise for maintaining health, hygiene and safety for people or pets. This includes the provision of drinking water for your pet. Therefore, cleaning outdoor areas, such as animal

pens or similar, for these reasons are also acceptable.

Wash your pet with a bucket or hand held hose fitted with an on/off nozzle. Clean animal pens with efficient high-pressure washers.

Can I wash my car at home?

Yes. Under Level 4 water restrictions washing cars, trailers, boats, boat motors and jet skis at home is allowed with a bucket and rinsed with a trigger hose on the lawn at any time. Pressure washers may also be used.

What are some simple tips my family can use to save water at home?

Council encourages everyone to be 'wise with our water'. Some top tips include:

- Take shorter showers (aim for five minutes or less) and use a water efficient shower head.
- Always run your washing machine on full load (where you can save up to 10 litres of water each wash).
- Wait until you have a full dishwasher before running it.
- Turn the tap off while brushing your teeth.
- Use greywater from laundries, sinks, and showers on gardens and lawn if safe to do so (in line with the NSW Guidelines for Greywater Reuse in Sewered, Single Household Residential Premises).
- Fix leaky taps and pipes you have put off doing to stop water loss.
- For outside, mulch, mulch and more mulch to help keep garden

soils moist.

Dubbo Regional Council has collaborated with Smart Approved WaterMark to provide a range of top tips and resources to help you save water inside and outside your home. Resources are available on the Dubbo Drought Hub Save Water page.

BUSINESSES

Do businesses have to comply with restrictions?

Dubbo Regional Council recognises that water is crucial to regional economic activity, that is why we are providing support to our business customers during restrictions.

Restrictions for businesses see many similarities to those that apply to residential households. Under Level 4 water restrictions, certain non-residential premises (businesses and institutions) may be required to submit a Water Saving Action Plan (WSAP).

Only businesses determined by Council as the top high-water users will be notified and required to complete a WSAP. Once the WSAP has been approved by Council, businesses will need to implement and comply with their WSAP.

Businesses that are not required to submit a WSAP are still expected to comply with the water restrictions as per the Non-residential/commercial water restrictions table (PDF 84.3KB).

So, what is a WSAP and what is the purpose of a WSAP?

Business water consumers have an important role to play in conserving Dubbo's water and reducing the likelihood that greater restrictions will be introduced.

A Water Saving Action Plan (WSAP) is a tool to assist business users in assessing their current water use levels and implementing changes that can be made to improve their water efficiencies. Benefits of completing a WSAP include:

- Improved management of water consumption resulting in reduced water-related costs,
- Change in staff behaviour and strengthened reputation,
- Development of a plan for the continuity of activities, where appropriate, in times of drought, and
- Support of broad community efforts in reducing the likelihood that greater restrictions are introduced in the future.

Types of measures that a business may identify in their WSAP include:

- Upgrading inefficient equipment (toilets, showers, tapware and machines),
- Identifying and fixing leaks in systems,
- Include water wise information for customers/guests, and
- Setting water consumption reduction targets.

Watering of landscaped areas and lawns at your business

Under the new Level 4 water restrictions, which came into effect on 4

November 2019, businesses can water outdoors as follows:

- A maximum of 30 minutes (total) on ***Mondays*** and a maximum of 30 minutes (total) on ***Thursdays***.
- Only one water outlet may be used at any one time. For instance, your irrigation system, or a hand held hose etc. You ***cannot*** water from multiple outlets at the same time.
- For multi-station / multi-zone irrigation systems, the maximum 30 minutes is the total watering time permitted, it does not mean 30 minutes for each station / zone. For example, if your system has six (6) stations / zones around your property you may want to set each station / zone to five (5) minute for an even distribution of water.

As per residential water restrictions, watering outdoors covers both lawns and gardens, so businesses have the choice whether they water their garden or their lawn or a combination of both – up to the maximum 30 minutes (total) each watering day. There is also the choice not to water outdoors at all.

I would like to lay a strip of turf outside my business; is this permitted?

Like residential water restrictions, under Level 4 water restrictions, watering is permitted for turf establishment – ***up to 50 square metres of new turf*** – with use of suitable ground preparation and soil wetting agents.

A new turf watering plan must be submitted to and approved by Dubbo Regional Council using the New Turf Watering Plan Application Form

(PDF 654.2KB). Further information on new turf is on the Dubbo Drought Hub Non-Residential Water Restrictions page.

I am an accommodation provider; can I top up or fill my pool?

Yes, under Level 4 water restrictions you can top up your swimming pool and spa only for a two (2) hour maximum time period, providing a pool cover is then used to reduce water loss.

The first fill of your swimming pool is only permitted with consent from Dubbo Regional Council. Again, a pool cover must then be used to reduce water loss.

I operate a facility that has a hydrotherapy pool; are there any restrictions for these pools?

No, under Level 4 water restrictions there are no restrictions to health and wellbeing facilities.

Can businesses wash down hard areas such as driveways, paths or even windows?

Washing down of hard areas, driveways, roofs, walls and paths and cleaning windows is permitted under Level 4 water restrictions for health and safety reasons or to continue core business activities.

Efficient high pressure, low flow rate cleaners with a trigger control are to be used for cleaning purposes. Buckets are also permitted.

What are the restrictions for pet care or animals?

Similar to residential water restrictions, there should not be any compromise for maintaining health, hygiene and safety pets/animals. This includes the provision of drinking water, washing pets and cleaning

outdoor areas, such as animal pens or similar.

Wash pets/animal with a bucket or hand held hose fitted with an on/off nozzle and clean animal pens with efficient high-pressure washers.

Water use for car wash facilities and car yards

Under Level 4 water restrictions, core business activities are permitted.

Washing vehicles by hand is permitted with use of efficient high-pressure, low flow rate cleaners with a trigger control. Buckets are also permitted.

Water use for commercial cleaning businesses

Under Level 4 water restrictions, water use is permitted for health and safety reasons only or to continue core business activities. Efficient high-pressure, low flow rate cleaners with a trigger control are to be used.

Water restrictions for landscape construction works

Under Level 4 water restrictions, there are a range of restrictions under for landscape construction works – both hard works and soft works (such as planting and turf installation). Please see the Non-residential/commercial water restrictions table (PDF 84.3KB) for details of permitted works and recommendations.

COUNCIL

What is Council doing to reduce its use of town water?

Dubbo Regional Council have undertaken a thorough review of all

Council's water usage and have put measures in place to ensure the current water usage is reduced, but also ensuring the needs of the community are met. Council has turned off the water for many of its own assets including selected open spaces and all median strips.

Under Level 3 water restrictions, Council's businesses, like many businesses across the Dubbo Regional LGA prepared Water Saving Action Plans (WSAPs) to guide reductions of their daily water usage.

From 1 November 2019 when Level 4 water restrictions came into force, all of Council's businesses have been operating in line with the water reduction activities/targets in their WSAPs.

Why are Council's public pools still open at Level 4 and above water restrictions?

Council's three public swimming pools – Dubbo Aquatic Leisure Centre, Wellington Aquatic Leisure Centre and the Geurie pool – are high priority sporting and recreational facilities for Council. They provide health and wellbeing benefits during the hot summer weather but also provide significant social benefits for communities to escape the pressures of the drought.

Does Council own, operate and manage Burrendong Dam?

No, Dubbo Regional Council does not own, operate or manage Burrendong Dam, rather the NSW Government through WaterNSW manages this water supply.

Where does Dubbo's groundwater come from and what is Council's allocation?

Dubbo Regional Council has an annual local water utility entitlement of

up to 4.3 gigalitres from the Upper Macquarie alluvial aquifer. The aquifer is managed by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment where groundwater is owned by the Crown.

What government assistance is available for farmers across the Dubbo Regional LGA?

Council continues to monitor government drought stimulus and financial assistance packages available for farmers, rural businesses, rural landowners and communities across the Dubbo Region.

The NSW Government's Rural Assistance Authority has a range of assistance programs – covering economic, social and wellbeing programs – for farmers and rural business owners to access. For instance, the Emergency Drought Transport Subsidy, which is for use to assist with the cost of transporting fodder, water to a property for stock or domestic use, stock to/from agistment, stock to sale or slaughter.

The NSW Department of Primary Industry's Drought Hub also connects those affected by the drought with services and support.

At a federal level, the Australian Government's Farm Household Allowance, which is administered by the Department of Human Services, provides financial assistance to farmers and their families, while FarmHub is the Government's one-stop shop connecting Australian farmers with federal services and support.

There are many other assistance programs available such as (but not limited to) Rural Aid, CWA of NSW Drought Aid, Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society.

REPORTING AND PENALTIES

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

Dubbo Regional Council compliance staff undertake patrols across the Dubbo Regional LGA to ensure compliance with restriction activities, both residential and non-residential/commercial.

If compliance staff see someone breaching water restrictions they will issue a breach card that provides an overview of the breach, which is then followed up with a written warning letter. Any subsequent offence will incur an on the spot fine of \$220.

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

Report it. You can report a breach by filling out an online Suspected Water Restriction Breach Form. Take photographic evidence if possible as it would help council to investigate the issue. You can also contact Dubbo Regional Council by email at council@dubbo.nsw.gov.au or by phone 02 6801 4000.

Please provide as much detail as possible so Council can investigate the matter.

Last Edited: 16 Mar 2023