



Figure 1. McGanns Rock Dam, Kondinin Shire

Ensuring reliable community water supplies is an important way to secure farming operations against serious on-farm water shortages that may lead to the sourcing of alternative supplies outside the farm gate.

Emergency water response planning is a key role of the State Government. The Department of Water has a lead role - supported by the Department of Agriculture and Food, the Water Corporation and local governments.

Planning aims to ensure that the commercial and lifestyle interests of farming families in dryland agriculture areas are safeguarded against serious water shortages, particularly in respect to livestock needs.

A responsibility rests on all stakeholders, including farmland communities, local government and State Government agencies to actively participate and cooperate in an integrated approach to water supply planning in rural areas.

Community water sources form part of a larger network of strategic off-farm emergency water supplies established as part of rural water planning.

In times of low rainfall and water supply shortages, it is the responsibility of landholders to look for ways to reduce demand, including by reducing livestock numbers.



Community water sources include larger and more reliable agricultural area dams (AA dams) constructed during the development of agriculture in the south west, along with more recently built community dams and water bores.

Some farmland communities or individual farmers have access to small localised water supplies (eg AA dams) that, although they are unlikely to be holding significant volumes of water, can play an important role in securing farming businesses against serious on-farm water shortages, even if only for short periods.

Water deficiency declaration

To activate a water deficiency declaration that involves a local government authority and the State Government, it needs to be demonstrated that local or neighbourhood supplies have been exhausted and users have to travel to more remote sources of livestock water – 40 kilometres or more (one way).

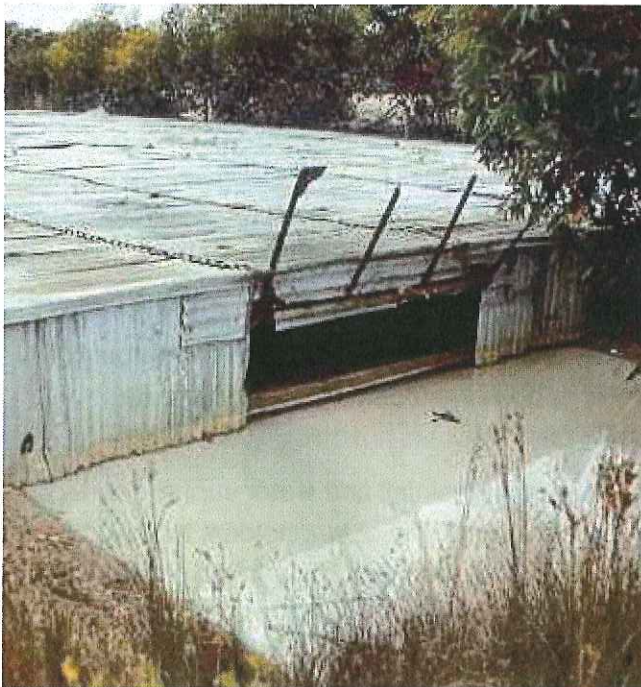


Figure 2. Scaddan AA Dam, built in the 1920's, Esperance Shire

The provision of neighbourhood supplies may also be realised through the cooperative efforts of adjoining landholders who may be prepared to share surplus water supplies or work collectively to explore alternative water sources.

Access to community dams, tanks and bores

In the event that on-farm, local and neighbourhood water supplies have been fully utilised, farmers are encouraged to draw water from larger strategic community dams, tanks and bores that have been provided for the supply of livestock water under emergency conditions.

This water is not treated and is supplied for livestock use only.

Strategic community dams, tanks and bores are important sources of emergency farmland water, particularly for livestock. They should be used sparingly and not at times when on-farm supplies are available.

These supplies are provided principally to secure broadacre farming operations in the event of serious on-farm water shortages. They are not intended to be used to satisfy the demand for large quantities of water required by intensive industries such as a feedlot.

However, water users other than broadacre farmers may use these strategic water supplies providing they apply a conservative approach to the use of the water and no landholder is disadvantaged through the excessive use of supplies by one or two landholders.

Should an unreasonable and excessive amount of water be drawn from a strategic community water supply, the offending party/ies, if identified, would be asked to limit their draw. In such cases, large water users would need to make alternative arrangements in line with business needs.



Figure 3. Storage tanks, King Rocks Community Dam, Kondinin Shire

Strategic community dams/bores are important and need to be carefully protected. It is essential to have a maintenance program to ensure the dam/bore and associated infrastructure (including catchments, tanks and pumps, along with access and truck turnaround areas) are kept in good working order at all times.

It is recommended that local community management committees be established for each community dam/bore and a community leader be nominated as the contact person for each site. The community leader should be familiar with the local and regional Emergency Farmland Water Response Plans (where available).

Access to scheme water, standpipes and tanks

In those parts of the dryland agricultural area with access to a piped water service, standpipes and storage tanks have been provided as a source of emergency water for those landholders whose properties are not connected to the pipeline.

The use of these standpipes is generally controlled by the local government authority, which is charged directly by the Water Corporation for the water used from these sources by landholders. Landholders are expected to record their water consumption rates from standpipes. Water charges incurred will be recovered from landholders at the discretion of local government.

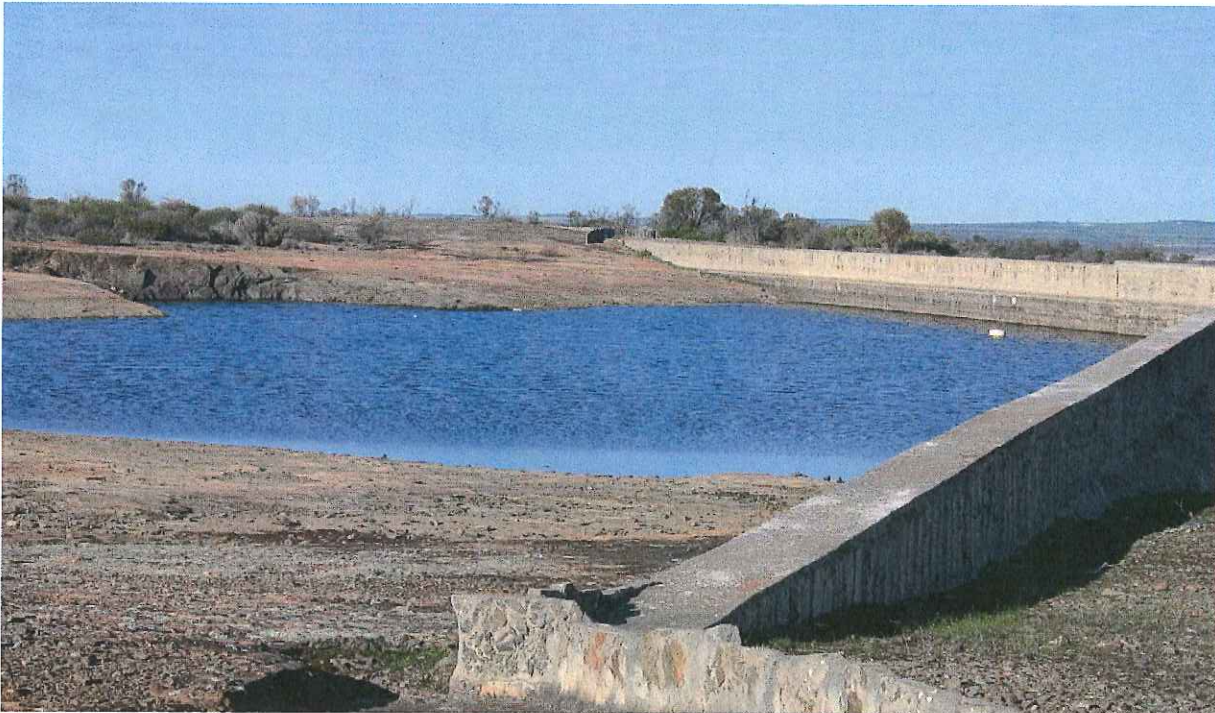


Figure 4. Dingo Rock Community Water Supply, Lake Grace Shire

It is important to note that water from standpipes/tanks linked to a piped water service is intended for **short-term emergency** use only, not as a regular source of water to provide for the ongoing needs of a farming business.

Unrestricted drawdown from standpipes may compromise the rate of supply to landholders connected directly to the pipeline. The Water Corporation aims to limit the daily flow from standpipes to 50 kL. Tank storage is encouraged in order to provide reserve capacity and limit drawdown directly from standpipes at peak times.

The Water Corporation reserves the right to close standpipes should supply to the system be compromised.

While landholder self-sufficiency remains the primary objective, preparing for those times when on-farm supplies fail is an essential function of rural water planners.

Further information

For more information on emergency farmland water response planning and water deficiency declarations, visit ruralwaterplanning.water.wa.gov.au

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