



# Media Release

## Hunter Water

Tuesday 17 December 2024

### First sod turned as construction kicks off at Hunter Water's Desalination Plant in Belmont

Construction has commenced on Hunter Water's biggest water infrastructure project since the upgrade of Grahamstown Dam, taking the region one step closer to a secure water future. In celebration of the construction, Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary, was pleased to welcome Minister for the Hunter, Yasmin Catley, and Lake Macquarie Mayor, Adam Shultz, to the construction site in Belmont today.

The building of the Belmont Desalination Plant is a crucial step in securing the Lower Hunter's water supply, adding up to 30 million litres per day of rainfall-independent drinking water capacity to Hunter Water's system, or about 15 per cent of the region's average daily needs.

Minister for Water, Rose Jackson, said she was pleased to see work commence on this piece of State Significant Infrastructure for the region.

"The Lower Hunter is part of the largest regional economy in the nation; however it faces heightened vulnerability to drought. This \$530 million investment will bolster the region's resilience and improve its capacity to manage drought risks.

"This is a crucial step in assuring our community that the Minns Labor Government is deeply committed to addressing water security in the Lower Hunter.

"Desalination offers the significant benefit of being a water source that doesn't rely on rainfall, so it can provide a safe and reliable supply, regardless of the climate. It's great to see Hunter Water move into the construction phase, advancing efforts to meet the region's growing needs in an ever-changing climate," Minister Jackson said.

Minister for the Hunter, Yasmin Catley, said the desalination plant will be a secure and reliable water source for the Lower Hunter.

"This project will shore up a quality water supply for our growing region.

"There has been strong community calls for a reliable, safe and sustainable water source and that's exactly what we're delivering.

"I am pleased the construction phase will support many local jobs over the next four years and once operational, the plant will be powered by renewable energy," Minister Catley said.

Mayor Adam Shultz welcomed the investment in Lake Macquarie.

"The construction and operation of the Belmont Desalination Plant is a significant investment in our city. I am especially pleased that Hunter Water will be allocating \$400,000 to develop shared path connections for pedestrians and cyclists near the site. I'm also looking forward to Hunter Water collaborating with Council and the community on land regeneration projects."

Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary, said the start of construction marks a significant milestone in securing a sustainable and drought-resilient water supply.

"Breaking ground on the desalination plant signals our commitment to ensuring a reliable water supply for the region, now and into the future. It is a priority project for Hunter Water, and we are pleased to be working alongside our construction partner John Holland to get the work done.

"Building a 30 megalitre per day desalination plant allows us to address the region's drought risk as quickly as possible and provide a reliable minimum supply of safe drinking water for our customers, even in times of drought.



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“The Plant will be an enduring, integrated, and vital part of the Lower Hunter’s water supply system,” Mr Cleary said.

Funding for the desalination plant has been incorporated in Hunter Water’s pricing submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, which is currently under assessment. New Hunter Water prices commence from 1 July 2025. Construction is set to take approximately four years, with the Plant expected to be operational in 2028.

To learn more about the Belmont Desalination Plant, head to [hunterwater.com.au/desa](https://hunterwater.com.au/desa)

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