

## Water Restrictions

### Frequently asked questions

You may have noticed things are pretty dry in Townsville at the moment. We've had two failed wet seasons, and experts are predicting another dry summer. With the huge amount of water we use and no new rain to fill it our dam is getting very low, and we need to do everything we can to make sure it doesn't go dry. It's never been more important for us all to *Love Every Drop*.

#### Quick facts about our city's water

- » Townsville residents use over four times more water per person than in most major cities
- » The average Townsville household uses 1,700 litres of water per day. Residents in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne use around 210 to 285 litres per day
- » More than 70% of Townsville's residential water supply is currently being used on our lawns and gardens
- » We are currently going through one of the driest periods on record. The weather bureau forecasts that the strong El Nino cycle we're in means the dry spell is likely to continue for a while



Ross River Dam at 40%



Ross River Dam at 30%



Ross River Dam at 20%



Ross River Dam at 10%

#### 1. Why are we on water restrictions?

Restrictions have been introduced because our water supply in Ross River Dam is very low and Townsville Water needs to slow down the amount of water we're using to make sure that the small amount of water we have in our dam lasts as long as possible.

Our region is currently experiencing one of the driest periods we've ever had. The data shows that the rainfall over the last three years has been in the lowest 10 per cent on record. The latest prediction from the weather bureau shows only a 40% chance of above median rainfall from October to December.

As a city we need to reduce our water use to make our supply last longer. The more we reduce our consumption, the longer we can delay moving up to higher levels of restrictions.



## 2. Why are there set times for watering?

Have you ever been to a sporting event or concert where a lot of people are trying to use their phones at one time? The huge demand at once means that the network can't cope so it slows everything down. It's the same with our water network. The odd and evens system means that the water network can be prepared for peak times so that everyone is able to get the water they need.

Because it's so important that we all do our bit to conserve water by sticking to the water restrictions, having set days and times makes it easier for you to make sure you're not using too much. Without having the allocated times, residents would need to keep track of how much water they're using on a daily basis and keep it under a certain limit. The odds and evens system makes it easier for us to identify when people aren't doing the right thing so we can enforce the restrictions more effectively.

There are still options available for watering your lawn and garden. For example, handheld watering is allowed under some levels as an alternative to using your sprinklers during the allocated watering times.

## 3. How are the watering times chosen?

Currently, more than 70% of Townsville's residential water supply is used in properties on our lawns and gardens. That's quite a large amount of our supply! The allocated watering times are designed to reduce the amount of water we use so we can conserve as much of our small supply as possible and make it last longer.

We set the watering times to be as convenient as possible for most people. The watering times are also chosen to make sure there is as little evaporation as possible from the watering system so we're also wasting less and making every drop count. Regardless of restrictions, it's always best to water in the early morning or late afternoon so you're not losing most of the water to evaporation.

## 4. Can I water at different times?

Watering outside of the allocated times is not allowed.

At some levels hand watering is permitted at any time on any day. But because of the amount of water they use, sprinklers and irrigation systems must not be used outside of the watering times. We would also encourage you to see if there are more ways that you can reduce your water use even more than the guidelines in the restrictions. We all need to do whatever we can to love every drop.

## 5. Am I an odd or even numbered property?

Property addresses are categorised as 'odd' if:

- » the number of the property within the street is an odd number  
E.g. *3 Jones Street* or *Unit 'X' / 17 Anywhere Crescent*;
- » there is no allocated street number, and the property's lot number is an odd number  
E.g. *Lot 11, Smith Road*;



- » the address includes more than one street number and the first number is odd  
E.g. *143 – 202 Walker Street; or*
- » there is no known street or lot number.

Property addresses are categorised as ‘even’ if:

- » the number of the property within the street is an even number  
E.g. *2 Jones Street or Unit ‘X’ / 98 Anywhere Crescent;*
- » there is no allocated street number, and the property’s lot number is an even number  
E.g. *Lot 18, Smith Road;* or
- » the address includes more than one street number and the first number is even  
E.g. *50 - 73 Long Street.*

## 6. What if my property has bore water?

Council does not have legislated power to impose water restrictions on bores. However, we’d still encourage you to conserve as much as possible even if you have a bore. Depending on where your bore water comes from you could find that as the level in the Ross River drops your bore may also run out.

If you do have a bore, please make sure you have a sign at your property so your neighbours and enforcement officers know. You should also let council know so you can be added to the bore register so you can avoid any infringements for water use that is outside of the water restrictions.

## 7. What happens to people who don’t follow the water restrictions?

People caught not following more than once are subject to fines. Infringements are \$365.00 for an individual and \$1,828.00 for a company. The value of these fines is set by legislation.

## 8. I’ve seen a neighbour watering outside the restriction. What should I do?

When we’re under water restrictions, it’s important that everyone is doing their bit and following the rules. If you do notice that someone is watering outside of their allocated watering times please let us know by contacting our Customer Service Centre on 1300 878 001 with the address, time and date.

Also, if you notice a hose or tap that has been left running for a number of hours or overnight please let us know so we can make sure it’s turned off.

Once you let us know about water use that’s not in line with the restrictions, we will follow up with the resident and the enforcement process may begin.



## 9. Why doesn't council follow the water restrictions?

Council does follow the water restrictions, but Council has a different type of restriction to residents. Under water restrictions council has to reduce its overall water use by a certain percentage at each level as per the below:

**Level 1** – 14% reduction in irrigation

**Level 2** – 24% reduction in irrigation and no watering between 9am and 4pm

**Level 3** – 56% reduction in irrigation and no watering between 9am and 4pm

**Level 4** – 84% reduction in irrigation volume and no watering 9am and 4pm

Council irrigates over 870 parks, gardens, medians, and community and council facilities. This huge number means we have to schedule our watering at different times to residents so it's evenly spread.

With such a large network, from time to time our equipment does break. If you see irrigation systems in our parks and gardens that you think might be leaking or broken, please let us know immediately by calling 1300 878 001 so we can get it fixed as soon as possible.

## 10. What about the pipeline to pump from the Burdekin Dam?

Even with the back-up plan of pumping from the Burdekin Dam, we're still using too much water for the system to keep up. The current pipeline is capable of delivering around 130ML per day into the Ross Dam.

Without a significant drop in the amount of water we use, pumping from the Burdekin will not sustain our water supply. As a city we have to reduce our water use by more than half for any water being pumped from the Burdekin to be of use.

Pumping from the Burdekin is also expensive – it costs us \$27,000 a day to pump on top of an annual allocation charge. The longer we can delay turning the pumps on, the better.

## 11. Why can't we increase our water storage?

Ross Dam cannot be made to hold more water and even if it could, the evaporation loss rate is too high. In a normal year the dam holds more than enough to meet the city's needs. In drought we draw on the other dam which was constructed to supply us with water - the Burdekin Falls Dam.

We have infrastructure and water allocations in place to sustain the city in drought.

## 12. Will I be reimbursed for the water I have paid for under my allocation?

If your property's water is billed under the Standard Plan, you are not eligible to be reimbursed for the water you don't use. This is no different to when we are not under water restrictions. Unless you are regularly receiving excess water charges, you would already be using less than your allocation. If you would prefer to pay for just the water you use, you may like to switch your water billing plan to the Water Watchers Plan during the water opt-in period in August.

You can find more information about water billing on [council's website](#).



### 13. Is there a restriction on when I can fill my pool?

Pools are not listed under the current Water Restriction Policy but may be included as an extra conservation measure if water consumption doesn't drop when the restriction levels increase. We would encourage pool owners to use pool blankets to reduce the rate of evaporation from the pool.

### 14. Can I flush my boat motor at any time?

You can flush your boat motor at any time under water restrictions. If you are flushing your boat motor though, please keep the restrictions in mind and do what you can to ensure that you're using as little water as you can.

### 15. Can I get a turf exemption?

#### **New turf exemption – Level 1 Water Restrictions**

- » 14 day exemption
- » Watering allowed every day, during the day with a maximum of 4 hours total per day
- » Watering system should comply to restrictions as soon as turf is established or for a maximum of 14 days

#### **New turf exemption – Level 2 Water Restrictions**

- » 14 day exemption
- » Watering allowed every day, during the day with a maximum of 2 hours total per day
- » Watering system should comply to restrictions as soon as turf is established or for a maximum of 14 days

#### **New turf exemption – Level 3 Water Restrictions**

Exemptions for the establishment of lawns on new residential homes will continue under Level 3 restrictions.

### 16. What else is being done to secure our water for the future?

The future of our water supply is managed under council's Water Network Demand Strategy. It takes into account things like building new infrastructure, upgrading old infrastructure, investigating new technologies, and improving water treatment processes.

Water restrictions are just one part of a much bigger strategy to manage our water supply now and for the future.

Work to be undertaken in the coming year (2015/16) includes:

- » City Wide Water Network Planning
- » Water Demand Management Action Plan
- » New Water Treatment Plant Planning
- » Burdekin Dam Level of Security of Supply
- » Haughton Pipeline Duplication
- » Integrated Water Supply Strategy

