



Dam management during floods



The recent widespread flooding across Queensland has prompted a lot of public interest in the flood attenuation capabilities and safety of SunWater's 19 dams.

Are SunWater dams safe?

With over 80 years' experience in operations SunWater designs all its dams with public safety as the highest priority and constructs them to withstand extreme rainfall events.

All SunWater dams undergo regular and comprehensive safety assessments to ensure they always adhere to National and State dam safety guidelines.

Experienced dam staff also adhere to comprehensive and safety-focused operating procedures to ensure our dams pose no risk to the general public during extreme rainfall events.

Are SunWater dams designed to stop floods?

With the exception of Peter Faust Dam in Proserpine, none of SunWater's dams are designed or developed to provide downstream flood attenuation. SunWater dams are designed to store water to their intended capacity and then safely divert any excess water inflows through purpose built spillways, release gates or outlet works.

Can SunWater release water to stop flooding?

Releasing water from SunWater dams before an expected major rainfall event or before a traditional wet season approaches, provides no beneficial effect to downstream flooding during moderate or major events.

Dam outlet works are generally designed to release small volumes of water for distribution to downstream customers and are not capable of large volume releases. Making outlet work releases to reduce dam levels would literally take months of continuous release and still only provide negligible downstream flooding benefits.

Gated dam releases to reduce storage levels are also, in most instances, insignificant when compared to the large volumes of water flowing into dam catchments and over spillways during significant rainfall events.

Don't dams physically stop water going downstream?

While the very nature of how dams work provides some very minimal downstream flood attenuation effects, during significant inflow events, the overall benefit is negligible.

When does SunWater make water releases?

SunWater makes water releases for two main reasons — demand from downstream water entitlement holders and for the environment.



A majority of SunWater's water releases are made for customers, such as farmers, towns and industry. These releases are based on customer demand and are regulated through Resource Operations Plans (ROP) for each particular water supply scheme.

SunWater also makes scheduled water releases for environmental flow purposes and these are based on extensive environmental flow research and fall within each scheme's ROP rules. Any additional ad hoc water releases from a dam would be in breach of established ROP rules and could also result in an imbalance to the eco-system.

During a flood event, how does SunWater advise people that a dam is spilling or releases are being made?

SunWater has comprehensive communication protocols in place which ensures all relevant stakeholders such as council, police, emergency services and counter disaster groups are updated regularly during a flood event release, to ensure those agencies can fulfill their role of advising downstream stakeholders of any appropriate action that needs to be taken.

Does releasing water have any other impacts?

Making water releases to reduce dam levels would have significant economic and environmental impacts. Reducing dam levels, and subsequently water allocations to downstream water users such as farmers, towns and industry, would lead to reduced water supply security and reliability for those users and potentially an impact on their economic viability.

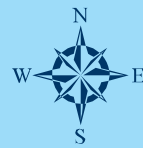
During a flood event SunWater will:

- Monitor water inflows into dams and notify downstream landholder/customers of major inflow events
- Provide regular inflow updates to relevant emergency services groups
- Pass water inflows through dam spillways and outlet works in accordance with operational guidelines and manage and maintain water levels in gated dams

If you are seeking information about:

- **Flood warnings**
Contact local councils, local disaster management groups or the Bureau of Meteorology
- **Flood level forecast**
Contact the Bureau of Meteorology
- **Flood damage, road closures, crowd control**
Contact local councils or police
- **Disaster relief**
Contact the State Emergency Service (SES)

SunWater Dams



Legend

- ▲ Dams
- TOWNS
- ~ Rivers

For up to date information on dam levels visit www.sunwater.com.au/water_store.htm or call us on **13 15 89**