



Private Dam Maintenance and Repairs

A dam is a valuable asset on any property, providing essential water supplies.

If your dam fails, it can lead to:

- Expensive repair bills
- Lost production whilst your dam is fixed
- Legal liability for any damage caused to people, property or the environment It makes sense to keep your dam in good repair!

Dam owners often seek advice from Southern Rural Water about their obligations when undertaking works to dams – particularly when a works licence is needed.

This Fact Sheet provides some guidance on when a works licence is required.

Remember, it is always best to check with us before you start work.

Spillway

Your dam spillway must be designed to take a 1 in 100 year flood (technically known as an Australian Rainfall Index rain event).

Storms can hit without warning, and a correctly sized spillway is essential protection for your dam. The spillway must never be reduced in size without approval from Southern Rural Water.

Compensation pipe and valve

The valve must be operated regularly to avoid seizure due to rust and other build-up. Regular operation will also reduce the amount of silt and other debris that can build up in the compensation pipe. You should maintain safe and simple access to the valve at all times.

Dam wall

Keep your downstream wall clear of trees, shrubs and weeds. The slope should have an even cover of deep-rooted grass, regularly maintained to allow a visual assessment of the wall.

Dam crest

You can use the crest of the dam for vehicle or stock crossings. However, it should be kept level to avoid pot holes and uneven areas forming. You should also keep your crest fenced to exclude stock from both the upstream and downstream walls. Allowing stock access to the walls will cause damaging erosion.

You should install a straight line of fence posts across the crest and check them regularly. Any movement should be immediately reported to Southern Rural Water and your dam engineer. You should also regularly check for leaks, wet spots, slumping or any signs that the dam may be at risk. Regular inspections and prompt maintenance will help you get the maximum life span from your dam. This advice is general in nature, and you should seek expert advice about the best way to keep your dam safe and operating properly.

What is maintenance?

Maintenance of a dam does not require a licence from Southern Rural Water. This includes:

- Cleaning out of weeds
- Repairing erosion damage on the crest, embankment or spillway
- Removal of vegetation from the dam wall
- Maintenance of the compensation pipe or trickle pipe

What works on a dam will require a licence?

Works other than maintenance described above will need a licence! It is always best to check with us before you start work.

You need a licence to construct, alter, operate, remove or decommission any dam that:

- Is located on a waterway
- Has a wall height of 5 metres or higher and a capacity of 50 megalitres or more
- Has a wall height of 10 metres or higher and a capacity of 20 megalitres or more
- Has a wall height of 15 metres or higher, regardless of the capacity.

Works that require a licence include:

- Any alteration to the dams holding capacity or wall height
- Alteration of the crest, spillway, compensation pipe or trickle pipe
- Reconstruction of the dam wall due to damage – such as damage sustained during a flood
- Repairs that result in disturbance to the embankment – such as removing a section of the embankment to replace or repair a compensation pipe or trickle pipe.
- Works to dam that changes the flow regime of the waterway.

Getting a licence?

We strongly recommend that before you begin, you make an appointment to have a chat with one of our staff.

To obtain a works licence, you must submit:

- An application form (see our website)
- A site plan or location plan
- Appropriate fees (see our website)

Engineering requirements?

Typically, a condition of a works licence will require the dam works to be designed and the construction supervised by a suitably qualified engineer. Our website has a list of consulting engineers.

Note: a 'suitably qualified engineer' means a person eligible for membership of the Institution of Engineers Australia who is able to demonstrate competence in the design, construction supervision and surveillance of dams.

More information

For more information contact us on 1300 139 510 or visit www.srw.com.au. See also our fact sheets on:

- Private Dam Construction Licences
- Private Dam Surfacewater Water Licence