

# Policy – Dam Safety Management

## Policy

Southern Rural Water:

1. Southern Rural Water recognises the importance of its large dams and weirs to businesses and communities.
2. SRW recognises that dam ownership requires considering events of very low probability and high consequence, which may occur over the long-term.
3. SRW will not expose the community to unacceptable risks from the existence and operation of SRW dams.
4. SRW commits to:
  - a. use recognised prevailing good practice in managing its dams.
  - b. accept ANCOLD Guidelines as the primary guidance for good management dam safety practices.
  - c. accept the Victorian Dam Safety Regulator's (DEECA's) Guidelines.
  - d. have regard to the Guidelines as specified in the corporation's Statement of Obligations.
  - e. Updating information at regular intervals as specified by the Dam Safety Management manual.
  - f. Remain abreast of industry developments and investigate and adjust practices as required to cater for new developments.
  - g. Investigate dam safety issues as they arise and as soon as reasonably practicable, to determine the threat level and any actions that may be required.
5. Any departure of SRW's dam safety program from the ANCOLD Guidelines requires:
  - a. a documented risk assessment or the written approval of a specialist dams engineer.
  - b. approval from the Managing Director.
  - c. reporting to the board.
6. SRW recognises this as a very specialist area. We commit to ensuring that staff and advisors who are directly involved in dam safety hold suitable qualifications and are appropriately accredited for the required technical expertise.
7. SRW will manage dam safety risks by a program of inspection, maintenance, monitoring, safety reviews, consequence assessment, risk assessments, training, reporting, emergency management, audits and remedial work.
8. SRW will progressively upgrade dams to satisfy the ANCOLD *Societal and Individual Risk Reference Guidelines* so that the risk of dam failure falls and remains below the '*Limit of Tolerability*'.

9. SRW will assess dam safety improvements to further lower risks to *As Low As Reasonably Practical* (ALARP) considering:
  - a. the cost and the benefit of possible improvements.
  - b. legal requirements.
  - c. the views of government or the dam safety regulator.
  - d. the prevailing risk level and the level of risk reduction to be achieved.
  - e. options to improve societal and individual risk and their associated cost.
  - f. other funding sources.
  - g. the views of the affected public.
  - h. community and political expectations using the DEECA 2015 publication *Engaging Communities on Dam Safety*.
  - i. other business risks.
10. SRW will consider the cost/benefit analysis and costs to the relevant customers when assessing options for dam safety upgrades to meet ANCOLD guidelines.
11. SRW will inform affected communities about dam safety upgrades using the DEECA 2015 publication *Engaging Communities on Dam Safety*.
12. SRW will comply with its Dam Safety Management Manual (2021) approved by the Managing Director and any future updates of the manual.
13. The role of the Board of Directors is to:
  - consider and approve the Dam Safety Management Policy, including annual review.
  - review and authorise the Annual Report of the Dam Safety Program
  - approve capital works on Headworks assets where expenditure is >\$750k for budgeted works or >\$75k for unbudgeted works
  - approve the Dam Safety upgrade program in Water Plans and Corporate Plans
  - consider and address dam safety issues or threats that may arise between each Annual Report
  - remain abreast of the State Government's general dam safety responsibilities and obligations for Board members
  - oversee the implementation of dam safety improvements identified in audits.

## Definitions

**ANCOLD:** the Australian National Committee on Large Dams.

**ALARP:** As Low As Reasonably Practicable principle, which states that risks lower than the 'limit of tolerability', are tolerable only if risk reduction is impracticable or if its cost is grossly disproportionate (depending on the level of risk) to the improvement gained.

**Limit of Tolerability:** A limit set by ANCOLD to assess safety upgrades for dams. The limit is plotted on F-N charts that plot the cumulative probability of failure (F) against number (N) of

deaths, and the plot of failure modes for a dam can be compared to this limit. If any section of the plot falls above the Limit of Tolerability, remedial works are required.

**Individual Risk:** A limit set by ANCOLD for the individual most at risk from a dam failure.

## Effective date and review date

This policy takes effect on 3 September 2024

It is due for management review in August 2025 followed by board approval.

## Who is affected

This policy applies to managers and employees who make decisions affecting the safety and maintenance of SRW dams.

## Rationale

Dam safety improvements are expensive and require judgments balanced between community safety and customer price impacts.

## Contact

For more information on this policy, contact the General Manager Asset Futures.

## Related documents

ANCOLD (2003), Dam Safety Management Guidelines

ANCOLD (2022), Guidelines on Risk Assessment

ANCOLD (2012), Guidelines on the Consequence Categories for Dams

DELWP (Updated March 2015), Guidance Note on Dam Safety Decision Principles

DEPI (April 2014), Strategic Framework for Dam Regulation DELWP (2017), Statement of Obligations

DELWP (August 2015) Engaging Communities on Dam Safety SRW (2022), Dam Safety Management Manual

SRW (2020), Water level management in Lake Glenmaggie policy

## Communications

This policy will be made available on SRW's website.