

WYANGALA DAM ROAD CLOSURE

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Increased security measures at Wyangala Dam near Cowra will not impede recreational access to the area, State Water confirmed today.

To bring the dam into line with contemporary security practices, public vehicle access to the road atop the dam wall will cease from late 2010 to better protect critical dam infrastructure.

The road will be closed in late 2010 to permit a major dam safety upgrade project, and will not reopen to public vehicles after construction ends.

Recreational use of the dam storage will continue and pedestrian sightseeing from the dam will resume once construction is complete.

After the September 11 attacks in the US, the Australian Government's Critical Infrastructure Emergency Risk Management Framework identified critical assets and established new security protocols. As a result State Water has reviewed its dam sites and started eliminating public vehicle access.

The Wyangala dam safety upgrade project will reduce the road over the dam wall to a single carriageway, and eliminate the traffic hazard to State Water staff undertaking maintenance work on the wall.

Recreational traffic from Cowra will travel via Mt McDonald Road to access the dam storage and State Water will fund the sealing of the remaining unsealed 3.7km of that road to improve the journey. The journey from Boorowa to recreation areas will be 12.5km longer.

State Water's General Manager Strategic Assets, Amit Chanan said closing the roadway on the dam to public traffic is motivated primarily by security requirements.

"The steps we are taking will adequately protect critically important infrastructure without disrupting public access to what is a popular recreation area for surrounding communities," he said.

"What was common practice in decades past is now recognised as inappropriate for this type of critical infrastructure, given its role in regulating the flow of huge amounts of water. There will be some very minor inconvenience for travellers but State Water has agreed to fund improvement to the road to help minimise that inconvenience.

"We are living in changed times and our actions mirror those of dam owners internationally who are also moving to end public vehicle access across dams, the most noteworthy example being Hoover Dam in the United States, where the highway atop the structure is being re-routed."

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