Future water security guaranteed

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By Aaron Goodwin

Minister for Water Glenn Butcher and Bundaberg MP Tom Smith have made a guarantee that through Paradise Dam or new infrastructure, there will be adequate water security for the region moving forward.

During a Paradise Dam sight visit on 7 July, Mr Butcher was hopeful that the dam’s wall can be rectified to its original height and built on top of the existing spillway.

Both Labor members made it clear that from the business case options, to be provided by the end of the year, there would be an option to explore construction of new water infrastructure if it is unsafe to have the dam rectified.

“Lowering was the right decision, now we need to come up with a plan on how we are going to rectify and get the wall back to where it was before,” the Minister said.

“The critical decision that will need to be made now is, can we build back on the current dam wall that we have here now.

“I’m hopeful that from the early words I’ve heard, is that it’s possible.
“We’ve always said we’re hopeful we can start work on construction, whatever the option going forward is by 2023.”

The dam’s $100 million safety works will be completed by next week and the Minister was also hopeful, that an option from the business case would be chosen and fully designed within 12 months of receiving the business case.

“We will have to move into a full detail of construction, what it looks like, the design phase and then the funding for it,” the Minister said.

“I’m hoping that once I get the options and report given to me, I can progress it through to Cabinet as quick as possible, with an option that is acceptable for Cabinet and the people of Bundaberg.

“I’m looking at the best interests of the region and most people’s expectations are, that we can try get the wall back to where it was before the safety works were done.

“This is going to be a huge project, this is rebuilding a dam wall.

“We saw how long it took Rookwood Weir to go through the design phase, the detailed business case, all that took about four years.”

Mr Smith said it was the preferred option of the State Government to see the dam wall rectified if it is safe to do so.

“If we can’t restore it, then there’s going to be water security there in another form of infrastructure,” Mr Smith said.

“That will give our growers the confidence that they can invest now and into the future.

“That new infrastructure will be through a range of assessment options, it could be a weir downstream but that will be left to the experts.

“We are not going to turn our back on our growers.”

The Minister presented the media with concrete samples from the pulling down of the spillway in May 2020, reinforcing the government’s decision to lower the wall by 5.8 meters.

“The sample is great as a narrative around the decision of lowering the wall,” the Minister said.

“What you can see at the bottom of that sample, that’s why our concerns were very serious and that’s why we made the serious decision to keep the dam wall safe.

“Lowering by five metres at the time was the right decision from what I’ve seen today.

“You can see quite clearly that the dam wall is not what it should be.”

Mr Smith added during a visit to the dam a few months ago, he and the Minister ran their hands along the spillway and were able to take out bits of rocks.