

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1044

asked on Thursday, 2 September 2004

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MRS J CUNNINGHAM ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINES (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Government's election commitment to provide nearly \$1m towards a groundwater rescue package for the Bundaberg/Burnett region—

What progress is being made on the range of projects to protect groundwater resources and reduce the threat of salt water intrusion in the Bundaberg/Burnett region?

ANSWER:

The Bundaberg-Burnett region is the third largest sugar producing area in Queensland. However, at present there are unsustainable demands on the groundwater resources of the coastal Burnett area.

In response to these demands, the State Government made a commitment prior to the last State election to invest nearly \$1 million in the Burnett Coastal Groundwater Sustainability Initiative. This initiative will ease the pressure on stressed local groundwater aquifers and reduce the threat of saltwater intrusion in the region.

The State Government's funding support included:

- a \$275,000 contribution to the Burnett Shire Council for the repair of the Moore Park Floodgates near Bundaberg to prevent further saltwater intrusion inland;
- a \$660,000 grant to the Burnett Shire Council towards the construction of a proposed new off channel water storage at the Kalkie Water Treatment Plant to ease pressure off the region's groundwater aquifers during SunWater's annual maintenance operations when they close down their systems; and
- a \$30,000 Saltwater Intrusion Plan Feasibility Study to examine opportunities to reduce groundwater extractions by replacing water extractions from bores with surface water supplies.

Significant progress is being made on these projects, in particular, the joint State Government-Burnett Shire Council program to reinstate the Moore Park Floodgates.

The floodgates were constructed in the 1950s to prevent tidal seawater flows into drainage channels on agricultural land in the Moore Park area.

Over recent years undermining of the floodgates has occurred, thus permitting saltwater intrusion into the drainage system and increasing the possibility of seawater contamination of groundwater supplies for agricultural and urban users.

Floodgate repair works are expected to be completed by the end of 2004, well ahead of the June 2005 deadline. Construction works, including the installation of apron slabs, sheet piling and rock mattress protection, have now been completed and new inert plastic floodgates will soon be installed. Environmental works consisting of re-profiling of drainage channels and construction of innovative acid reduction weirs are also well advanced and will be completed following the current sugarcane harvesting season.

Progress on this project is an outstanding example of the State Government working in partnership with the Burnett Shire Council to deliver community, economic and environmental benefits through Smart State initiatives.

The proposed new off channel water storage project next to the Kalkie Water Treatment Plant at The Hummock will provide the Burnett Shire Council with a way to use supplemented water during SunWater's channel maintenance operations instead of relying on the stressed groundwater aquifers.

My Department has approved the Burnett Shire Council's Kalkie Off Stream Storage Planning Report for the proposed storage project and has recommended that the project be approved for subsidy under the Local Governing Bodies Capital Works Subsidy Scheme.

The Saltwater Intrusion Plan Feasibility Study has been finalised and is currently being assessed by my Department. Once this assessment is completed, a decision will be made on the focus of further detailed designs and funding options to progress the plan.