

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 824

asked on Tuesday, 17 August 2004

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MR SEENEY ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy-Stage 1 Report, which estimated when existing water supplies will be exhausted for water systems throughout South East Queensland—

Given this detail has been collected and reported, will he now detail when existing water supplies are estimated to be exhausted for the water systems in the following regions (a) far north Queensland, (b) north Queensland, (c) central Queensland, (d) Wide Bay-Burnett, (e) west Queensland and (f) south-west Queensland?

ANSWER:

### **a) Far North Queensland**

In relation to far north Queensland and particularly the Cairns-Atherton Tablelands region, my Department's planning studies have identified significant opportunities for using approximately 50,000 ML of unused water entitlements from Tinaroo Falls Dam. Combined with opportunities for water recycling; efficiency improvements; groundwater supplies identified south of Cairns; and unallocated water available from the Barron River, it is likely that the region's water requirements will be supported for approximately the next 20 years. My Department is currently working with regional councils in far north Queensland with a view to developing a 50-year water supply strategy.

### **b) North Queensland**

The water supply planning study undertaken by my Department for the Burdekin-Townsville area (north Queensland) indicated that the existing water storages have adequate spare capacity to meet the area's needs until at least 2015. This figure could be extended much further depending on whether water from the Burdekin Basin is required to be piped south to the Bowen region and to the coal fields of the Central Highlands. Beyond 2015, there are a number of identified non-structural and structural options for meeting the region's future water needs.

### **c) Central Queensland**

Planning studies undertaken in the central Queensland region by my Department have indicated that, with the exception of the Capricorn Coast and the Bowen Basin, existing water storages have adequate capacity to meet the needs of the area until the period 2010 to 2020.

The Central Queensland Regional Water Supply Study has been established to develop a strategic water supply plan for the region. A draft strategy is expected to be released in the last quarter of 2005.

A primary purpose of the Central Queensland Water Supply Study is to identify the most effective strategy for meeting the urban, industrial, mining and agricultural water needs of the Fitzroy Basin, Capricorn Coast and Gladstone areas, which, in the future, may have interdependent water supply needs. The short, medium and long term needs are being considered.

The strategy will consider and compare a wide range of structural and non-structural water supply options. These options include; storages in the Isaac Connors Catchment and on the Fitzroy River to meet projected demands in the Bowen Basin, Rockhampton and Gladstone areas; trading of water allocations; water re-use; desalination; and enhanced demand management. The introduction of water trading, which has been established through the water planning process, will assist in ensuring water moves to its highest value use.

Areas with short term supply needs such as the Capricorn Coast and Bowen Basin, are being progressed as a priority. In the case of the Capricorn Coast, the State Government has applied to the Australian Government for funding under the National Water Initiative for a pipeline from the Fitzroy Barrage on the Fitzroy River to the Capricorn Coast.

### **d) Wide Bay - Burnett**

In the Burnett Basin, the construction of the Burnett River Dam, the Eidsvold Weir and other infrastructure will make available over 200,000 ML which is likely meet demands beyond 2015. The introduction of water trading, which has been established through the water planning process, will also assist in ensuring water moves to its highest value use.

My Department is working to establish tradable entitlements in areas of the Burnett Basin where existing water supplies schemes are fully allocated, such as in the Boyne River.

Within the Wide Bay area, the proposed raising of Lenthall's Dam on the Burrum River, along with demand management, is predicted to meet demands in Hervey Bay until at least 2025.

### **e) West Queensland**

The shires and towns in western Queensland do not at this stage have the same growth pressures as we see in other parts of the State.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, township populations in the Georgina and Diamantina Catchments increased slightly between 1996 and 2001. However, these populations are expected to remain relatively stable during the next ten years. Consultation during the development of the draft Georgina and Diamantina Water Resource Plan (the Plan) indicated that demand for surface water to augment existing town water supplies might grow in the order of 500 ML across the Plan area during the next ten years.

The Plan allows for additional licences to be issued for town water supply purposes provided the proponent local government authority prepares a planning study satisfactory to my Department. The planning study would be required to demonstrate the need for the water and would need to address efficiency, environmental and other criteria as outlined in the Plan.

### **f) South West Queensland**

The major urban water supply system for the south west Queensland region is associated with Toowoomba City and the surrounding shires where it supplies potable water as part of a broader supply network.

The capacity of this system to meet future demands due to population growth and further industrial development in the region has recently been assessed by the Toowoomba City Council. This study estimates that the current water sources, which are a combination of available groundwater reserves and the yield from Cooby, Persistence and Cressbrook Dams, will be fully committed by about 2016.

This timeframe correlates well with the findings of the South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy-Stage 1 Report. This comprehensive water supply planning initiative that the State Government is progressing in partnership with the local governments of our south east corner, includes consideration of the future growth needs of greater Toowoomba, as this area is very much part of the overall south east growth corridor. The Stage 1 Report recommends that later stages of the Regional Water Supply Strategy consider the specific medium to longer term water needs of Toowoomba.

However, the 2016 timeframe does depend on how extensively a range of demand management measures such as installation of rainwater tanks and recycling of waste water, features increasingly in the future package of urban water management measures.

The remaining shires and towns in southern and western Queensland do not at this stage have the same growth pressures seen in greater Toowoomba and the rest of south east Queensland.

Scope to augment their supplies to meet any future demand growth can be accommodated through the emerging water trading provisions and opportunities that will arise as Water Resource Plans progressively rollout across the valleys and groundwater aquifers of the south west region.