

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 423

asked on Thursday 24 March 2005

MR LAWLOR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINES (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to all Gold Coast residents who are aware of the acute shortage of water in recent drought years on the Gold Coast and as growth in population and tourism will certainly increase the future demand for water and given the Gold Coast City Council has been investigating proposals to manage demand, obtain additional water from Wivenhoe Dam via a new pipeline and for the Stage 3 raising of the Hinze Dam—

What timeframe is required to complete the relevant planning studies and to obtain the necessary State and Federal Government approvals to enable the project to proceed?

ANSWER:

The South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy Stage 1 Report indicated that, on the information available at the time, supplying Wivenhoe Dam system water via a pipeline to the Gold Coast was the best short term action to address the forecast supply and demand balance for the Gold Coast, and that other demand management and supply options such as pressure and loss reduction, integrated urban water management, desalination, Wyaralong Dam and raising Hinze Dam should be further investigated in Stage 2 of the Strategy development.

Subsequently, Gold Coast Water has led the investigations into the southern regional pipeline. Other stakeholders have been Brisbane, Ipswich and Logan City Councils, Beaudesert Shire Council and SEQWater. State agencies have been involved in the process to provide regional level advice.

Since the completion of the Stage 1 Strategy Report, the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan was released with revised population projections. These projections would increase, in the short and medium term, demands on Wivenhoe Dam due to growth in the western corridor and urban consolidation. These changes have implications for also assessing options for future water supplies in SEQ.

Since the completion of the Stage 1 Strategy Report more information is also now available on the costs of desalination, the southern regional pipeline, other supply infrastructure and innovations like pressure reduction and water loss management. Pilot studies indicate that pressure and loss reduction can

usefully extend the time before augmentation of other supply infrastructure is needed, possibly by several years.

The State Government anticipates that the South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy will be completed by the end of 2006 in accordance with the commitment given in the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan.

The recently announced South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan provides \$149 million for Wyaralong Dam and \$12 million for the associated Cedar Grove Weir on the Logan River. These new storages will significantly increase water security to the Gold Coast and Hinterland. Funds have also been set aside for the Hinze Dam Stage 3, subject to approvals.

With regard to the timeframe required for localised planning, Gold Coast is undertaking a major planning and design project concerning the various pipeline options and early reports and recommendations are expected shortly. However, the size and sequencing of the pipeline depends on many factors including projected water demand in Ipswich and the southern region, new dams and weirs in these areas, revised yield calculations for these structures and for the Wivenhoe system, and projected demand for Wivenhoe water in other areas of south east Queensland. In such circumstances, and given the potential for reduced losses on the coast, it may make sense to stage the pipeline over the coming years.

Such a timeline will allow regionally optimal sequencing of all infrastructure. This will be laid out in the South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy when finalised in 2006.

The raising of the Hinze Dam to various levels for flood mitigation and additional supply is being examined concurrently with other options. The high level raising of the dam has environmental issues requiring Australian Government approval. Issues such as the relative efficiency and cost effectiveness of the high level raising are still uncertain. In any case a high level raising would take 10 years or more to provide new water to the Gold Coast.

With regard to the State Government approvals, these will be expedited with a view to meeting appropriate timelines for infrastructure. However, approval times will depend on the nature and complexity of a broad range of matters affecting several agencies. Naturally I am unable to give a commitment with respect to Australian Government processes.

In the interests of equity, the State must ensure that water solutions are best not only for the Gold Coast but for the region as a whole, given the vast sums of money and State subsidies involved. Several State agencies including my Department are providing planning advice to Gold Coast and other councils.

As the planning data are generated over the coming months, the State Government will be in a better position to make informed choices on the timing and location of new water storage facilities. Too much money has

been wasted in the past building badly planned water infrastructure and the State Government does not intend to repeat those mistakes at this critical point in our history.

I am satisfied that the necessary planning is on track to deliver water for continued development of the Gold Coast, at both the State and local government level.