

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 57

asked on Wednesday, 7 February 2007

MS DARLING ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

QUESTION:

Will he detail progress on the establishment of the Climate Change Centre of Excellence?

ANSWER:

The need for governments across the world to act on climate change is now undeniable. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently concluded in its Fourth Assessment Report that the warming of the world's climate system is unequivocal, accelerating and 'very likely' to be human induced.

This is the strongest statement on the causes and consequences of climate change that the IPCC, the pre-eminent science body on climate change in the world, has issued to date. The IPCC's report underlines the risk for our State in terms of a hotter, more drought-prone future, with more extreme weather events.

The recent Stern Report also reinforced that taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change is essential if we are to limit the future social, economic and environmental costs of climate change. The Stern Report also highlighted that adapting to a changing climate will be crucial in reducing vulnerability to climate change and is the only way to cope with the impacts that are inevitable over the next few decades.

The Queensland Government views the risks of climate change very seriously and acknowledges climate change as one of the major challenges for the State's future economic prosperity and community and environmental wellbeing. That is why the Government is investing to address and adapt to climate change.

During the 2006 election campaign, the Beattie Government committed to establishing a whole-of-government Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence.

This new Centre will provide policy advice and scientific information on climate change and its impact on the community, the economy and the environment, and the steps we must take to adapt. It will also provide advice about

measures to further reduce and offset the State's greenhouse gas emissions. The Centre is first of its kind in Australia and will confirm Queensland as a national leader in responding to climate change issues. In addition to its climate science capability, it will coordinate policy advice across the Government on a whole-of-issue basis, for both mitigation and adaptation policy areas.

In recognition of the need to adequately resource this important work, the Beattie Government has provided a recurrent allocation of \$8.6 million to establish the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence and, in addition, a one-off allocation of \$1.5 million in capital funding in 2008 to assist in setting up the centre. The recurrent allocation includes \$1.9 million per annum for a cloud seeding research project for the next four years.

The Centre is being established as a specialist unit within the Department of Natural Resources and Water. The climate change science and policy functions and resources from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the Environmental Protection Agency, will join the climate change science and policy functions of the Department of Natural Resources and Water. As a whole-of-government activity, the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence will establish integrated links with other State Government agencies managing climate change issues.

The arrangements necessary to make the Centre fully operational are well advanced. The staff to be transferred to the Centre have been agreed between the three agencies and the operational and administrative details are now being finalised. The Centre has commenced operations with approximately 54 staff, located at the Department's Indooroopilly Science Centre and also in Toowoomba.

The new Centre will form links with national and international climate researchers to ensure that Queensland benefits from global research on climate change, and maintains strong links with national policy initiatives.

At the same time, it will apply knowledge learned at a regional level, so that local climate change impacts can be assessed and acted on by the government.

Harnessing and building on the climate change expertise within the Queensland Government, the Centre will provide information and advice for all sections of the community, economy and environment. Active engagement with business and community groups will ensure the Centre's work is relevant to the needs of Queenslanders. The Centre will provide a world class capability within the State, to provide scientific and policy advice on the impacts of climate change and variability, including the impacts of drought.

The Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence is central to the Queensland Government's response to the challenges presented by climate change. The Centre will put the State on the front foot in responding to climate change, and it builds on Queensland's position as the Smart State.