

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 672

asked on Tuesday, 22 May 2007

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

QUESTION:

Will he provide residents of the Stafford Electorate with an update on the progress of the Queensland Water Plan?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Water Plan 2005-2010 identifies the Government's strategic program designed to meet the future water needs of Queenslanders and the environment.

The Water Plan sets down seven strategies for sustainable water management: secure entitlements for users and the environment; planning for future water needs; smarter use of existing supplies; pricing water for sustainability; compliance to protect users and the environment; protecting water quality; and investing in science.

Water planning activities are occurring in twenty-two plan areas and cover over ninety-one percent of the state.

Permanent trading of water entitlements is expanding steadily and the Water Allocations Register has nearly 8000 water allocations registered, valued at \$2 billion.

The Queensland Water Commission was established in June 2006 to create an independent entity responsible for achieving safe, secure and sustainable water supplies in South East Queensland. The Queensland Government has also committed to an infrastructure program worth over \$9 billion in this region.

At the same time, the Queensland Government has been working to promote water conservation across the State through, for example, the popular Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme, that provides rebates for certain water-saving devices and rainwater tanks. Since 1 July 2006, over 100 000 applications worth in excess of \$63 million have been approved and paid. The Queensland Government has also allocated \$40 million to assist businesses in South East Queensland to implement water saving measures through the Business Water Efficiency Program that commenced on 1 August 2006.

The Water Plan announced new water prices for SunWater irrigators, with no requirement for SunWater to impose an additional rate of return. In recognition of the severity of the ongoing drought, on 4 December 2006 the Premier announced a drought rebate for the fixed charges component of eligible SunWater rural irrigators' water bills for two years to June 2008.

The Queensland Government is also undertaking a state-wide program of water meter installation to support improved water management, and to ensure that entitlement holders get their fair share. The establishment of widespread metering has required the development of a number of innovative and practical operational policies. Under the Metering Policy, a user pays charge is levied to fund the installation and ongoing reading and maintenance of the meters. It is estimated that around 16,000 meters will eventually be in place. To date, approximately 500 new meters have been installed, as an addition to approximately 3,000 existing meters already managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Water.

The Queensland Government is also continuing to invest in science and technology as part of its strategic program for water. The Government has funded the establishment of the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence (the Centre), including an allocation of \$1.9 million per annum for cloud seeding research, for the next four years. The Centre will provide policy advice and scientific information on climate change and its impact on the community, economy and the environment.