QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 723

asked on Wednesday, 23 May 2007

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

QUESTION:

Will he provide an update on the progress of the Beattie Government's cloud seeding initiative?

ANSWER:

The cloud seeding research project (the research project) announced by the Queensland Government may provide the opportunity to improve water storage levels in dams in South East Queensland, and provide increased security of water supplies.

The Government is investing $7.6 million over four years, from 1 July 2007, in the research project, led by the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence, within the Department of Natural Resources and Water.

Cloud seeding is not a mechanism for breaking droughts. Seeding requires suitable clouds and the right conditions to be successful. The research project will study cloud physics and climate, and landscape conditions to give us a better understanding of the value of cloud seeding in South East Queensland. The Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence project will evaluate newer cloud seeding techniques, suited to the conditions in South East Queensland.

Recruitment of specialist project staff has commenced and a Scientific Advisory Group with membership from the CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology, University of Southern Queensland, Monash University, The United States National Centre for Atmospheric Research, and the Department of Natural Resources and Water, has been formed to provide expertise and technical guidance for the project.

The research project will be based on scientific research into local weather systems, synoptics and cloud microphysics, and will also have the advantage of improved measurements of rainfall from radar data from Doppler systems recently installed at Mt Stapylton and Redbank Plains by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Communication and consultation with stakeholder and community groups in South East Queensland will be key activities of the research project.

This Queensland project was identified by national and international experts at the Bureau of Meteorology Cloud Seeding Research Symposium (May 2007) as providing a model for rainfall enhancement studies in Australia, especially for warm convective cloud systems of the type that characterise sub-tropical regions, such as South East Queensland.

Cloud seeding should not be viewed as a ‘silver bullet’ for breaking drought. It may contribute to long-term water management strategies if the research project is successful in enhancing run-off to storages during rain events and thus increasing water supplies for the inevitable next dry period.