

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 733

asked on Wednesday, 23 May 2007

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Opposition being on the public record as supporting the dredging of major dams—

Will he provide information on the viability of dredging dams?

ANSWER:

With much of Queensland facing the current drought, it is not surprising that the dredging of dams has been suggested to improve our water supplies.

I have been advised by my Department that the dredging of dams to increase storage capacity would involve enormous costs for very little benefit. Dredging has been used in Queensland, however only for small farm dams of limited capacity where a landholder has no other source of supply.

The costs involved in dredging would be enormous if a significant increase in storage capacity was to be achieved. Each megalitre of additional capacity would require the removal of 1,000 cubic metres of material weighing about 2,000 tonnes, and this material would have to be transported out of the storage area. This would be approximately 200 large truck loads for every megalitre of silt removed. In addition, appropriate disposal areas for such large volumes of material would have to be found. The removal of 1,000 megalitres of silt, which would require about 200,000 truck loads, is insignificant when compared with the full storage capacity of, for example, Wivenhoe Dam (1,165,000 megalitres).

Such large scale earth moving could also involve significant environmental issues and could itself increase the risk of erosion and siltation.

For the large dams in drought affected parts of Queensland, the critical requirement at this time is heavy rain and flow into the dams, not additional storage that might be created by dredging. There is ample capacity available now to store inflows that are likely to occur.

I am confident that the measures adopted by the Government to combat the drought, including water savings, new dams, desalination and recycling, are the most appropriate measures to ensure the State's water supplies.